Sermon Seeds

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SERMON SEEDS

Outlines and Sketches of Sermons

especially adapted for Revival services, but appropriate for ordinary Pulpit preparation

BY THE

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SERMON SEEDS.

God's Wonderful Love.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3: 16.

Luther called these words of Christ, "The Bible in miniature." Another calls them "The epitome of the Gospel." One thing is very sure, that these words form a wonderfully comprehensive sentence, carrying us into the very citadel of truth. Wrapped up in this one pregnant statement lie the central and fundamental truths of redemption. There are other truths, but they are subordinate. These are chief; these are vital. These must be preached if Christ is preached. If there is any uplifting, regenerating, saving power in Christianity we will find it here: for in studying this one sentence we are studying the whole scheme of redemptive love.

I. We find in these words the MOTIVE *of redemption.* It was *love.* "God so *loved.*" Back of all efforts to rescue the race was God's great heart of love. The redemptive motive was love. God is love; love is sacrifice; the death of Christ was the sacrifice of God. Our redemption was love prompted, love conceived, love wrought. Could we but bring every concious sin-

ner earnestly face to face with this one reflection of God's love, it would melt all hearts, it would soften every rebellious thought, it would remove each doubt, it would take away every fear, and submissively, tenderly and very lovingly would every soul be found kneeling at the foot of the cross.

II. They reveal the METHOD *of redemption.* It was by the gift of God's Son. "God so loved the world that he *gave his only begotten Son.*" And the Son so loved that he willingly came "to seek and to save." When God gave his Son he knew what would be the result; what treatment he would receive. God knew that from his manger-cradle to his cross his only beloved Son would be humiliated, and tempted, and persecuted, and tried, and condemned, and scourged, and buffeted, and thorn-crowned, and spit upon, and crucified—cruelly and shamefully crucified by men, and yet—and yet, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." And Christ so loved the world that he "endured the cross, despising the shame," and "gave his life a ransom for many."

III. This brings us to a third thought, that in all this love and provision there was a PURPOSE—*salvation.* "That whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The motive, love; the method, sending his Son; the purpose, salvation. "God sent his Son into the world that the world thro him might be saved." Christ did not come simply to teach, to educate or to reveal, but to rescue. Had the world not needed saving Christ need never have come. "But," it may be asked, "what is the meaning, the character, of this salvation? saved from what?" The answer is

plain, from "perishing." Not from misfortune, so much, not from trouble, nor from ignorance, nor from degradation—all of these, but infinitely more—*from* everlasting death *to* everlasting life.

IV. It is just here that there is furnished also the GROUND *of our redemption*—an atoning sacrifice. "God so loved the world that he gave his Son"—gave him up to atoning, sacrificial death. That means the cross with all its tortures. Christ himself said, "The Son of man must be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. There, in the cross, Christ put his saving power. We are to glory only in the cross. "Behold the Lamb of God," as a sacrifice, a substitute, a propitiation for sin, "taking away the sin of the world." And, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

V. Still more personally important, we are told who are *the* SUBJECTS *of redemption*—every one that "believeth." "Whosoever believeth." God in Christ has made for every creature the fullest, freest, richest possible provision, with this one only condition—a loving, acquiescing, appropriating faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The passage brings to us all this one boundless, all-inclusive word, "Whosoever;" and this one qualifying condition, "believing." Meeting the condition, at once all the infinite wealth wrapped up in this one wonderful statement becomes our personal possession.

Soul Prosperity.

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." III John 1 : 2.

The character of the apostle John was especially kindly and loving. His gospel is full of love, telling about our Father's house, our Father's love, Christ our Friend, and the Holy Ghost our Comforter. His first epistle is a general one reiterating over and over again the word "God is love." His second epistle is a delightfully kind and consoling message to an "elect lady and her children." His third epistle is an address to his dear Christian friend, "the well-beloved Gaius." This friend we imagine must have been in bad health, or in temporal adversity of some kind. John shows the good opinion of his friend that his *soul prospered.* His good wish for him is that his body may prosper and be in health as well as his soul. Indeed, three kinds of prosperity are here indicated; prosperity in the general sense of the term—material; prosperity in health—physical; prosperity in soul—spiritual. There is such a thing as soul prosperity, then. It is the greatest blessing this side of heaven. Soul prosperity is soul health. Even a soul may lose its health and become sick. Often soul disease, like disease of the body, steals in unawares. A young girl became suddenly very sick, but the physician remarked that the disease had been working in her system for some time—probably for over two years. Unless we are very watchful soul unhealth may steal upon us in the same unexpected way. There are parallels between physical health and soul

health that may prove helpful for us to keep acquainted with.

I. SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF ILL HEALTH.

1. *Low temperature.* A lack of warmth and vitality, with pulse slow and weak is always an unfavorable condition. So luke-warmness is always a bad sign. It is a bad thing, as we have said, for health. It is a bad sign in business. A man who displays it has little prospect of prosperity. It is a worse sign in religion, for a man who displays it can have no soul prosperity at all.

2. *Failing appetite.* This is well known in the region of physical health. It ought to be as well known in the region of soul health. Lack of appetite for the study of God's Word, for the hearing of it preached, for Christian fellowship in the house of prayer, for conversation upon holy things—these all indicate a failing of soul health.

3. *Difficulty in breathing.* It is just the same in soul health. "Prayer is the Christian's vital health," and when prayer becomes an irksome duty the soul is very seriously diseased.

4. *General lethargy.* One may continue to drag himself thro the forms of service, but when it becomes heavy and lifeless and constrained, it is a sure sign of lack of soul health. A lack of heart enlistment, unreadiness for holy service, is a serious sign of ill-health of soul.

II. SOME MEANS OF RECOVERY AND GOOD HEALTH.

1. *Seek good food.* Some people become dyspeptic by imagining that certain foods do not agree with them, and drop them one after another until all the substantials are given up, and they are trying to live on broth

and nic-nacs. No wonder they thus become weak and sickly. Let those sick with soul disease seek spiritual food—Bible promises, gospel preaching and helpful instruction, and it will go a long way toward their recovery and health.

2. *Breathe freely.* Take good large draughts of the pure air of prayer. Return to your native air—the atmosphere of Calvary. The early stages of consumption can often be cured by taking large breaths, frequently inflating the lungs to their full capacity. Breathing fully and freely and frequently the atmosphere of prayer would cure most souls afflicted with ill health.

3. But let none forget that another needed means to recovery is *exercise.* Shut a horse up in a stable for months without exercise and he will die. An English doctor told his rich invalid patient: "Go to work; live on sixpense a day *and earn it.*" He knew that the man's main need was exercise. So in spiritual things; there is nothing like exercise to keep people warm and well. The wise physician of souls might well prescribe for many sick Christians the *exercise cure.* "He that winneth souls is wise." He is wise for his own sake as well as for others' sakes. Like with the Alpine traveller striving to rescue his freezing friend, we find that saving others is saving ourselves. Warmth came to the rescuer in the act of carrying the other to a place of safety. Warmth and health and blessedness come to every Christian in the act of putting forth effort for others.

If you are sick try good food, free breathing, and much exercise as a means of recovery and continued soul prosperity.

Thoughts of Comfort.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." Isaiah 40: 1.

What a sweet title: "My people!" What a cheering revelation: "Your God!" What a comfort there is in the thought that we are his people and that God is our God!

How general, too, is the need of a comfort. Each heart knoweth its own sorrow. All have some trials and afflictions and therefore need comfort.

1. How much comfort there is *in the thought of God's love.*

If we could only convince people everywhere that God loves them, how it would soften every rebellious heart, cheer every sorrowing heart and give comfort and hope. We have the assurance: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort thee." His love is strong like a father's. It is very tender like a mother's.

We cannot always understand God's dealings with us, but we can know that they are always prompted by love.

Here is a stone in a quarry. Men come along and rudely blast and tear it from its place. Then it is carried away, and other men come and cut and chip and chisel it rudely. The stone might say, "Why am I treated thus? How hard it is to undergo such rough and heartless treatment." But by and by there comes out from the rough stone a beautiful angel figure which all admire and love. Then the stone begins to under-

stand what the chipping and chiselling and hard treatment all meant. So with us, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grevious, but afterward—"

2. Growing out of this love of God *comes also his sympathy.*

The human heart craves sympathy. In times of trouble how grateful it seems to us to have friends who come and sympathize with us. But let us know that God sympathizes with us too. When we are sick and send for a physician we find it a difficult thing to tell the *fact* of our pain. But God so far enters into our troubles with us that he is "touched with a *feeling* of our infirmities." He feels for us and with us. "In all our affliction he is afflicted." As Jesus wept with Mary and Martha so he enters with us into our sorrows, and is full of the most tender sympathy. If we prize the sympathy of earthly friends how much should we prize God's sympathy.

3. Again, how much comfort there is *in the thought of God's wisdom.*

His dealings are all in love and sympathy and guided by infinite wisdom. We are often like little children crying for a poison, or something that would harm us. God is like a loving and wise parent who witholds the things that would destroy. He knows what is best for us, and does only with us and for us what is best.

We have read of a sea-captain who had a little daughter, and at ten years of age took her for the first time on the ship with him. When it came time for her to retire she was afraid. The little room seemed cramp-

ed and shut in, and all so dark and dreary that she was afraid to go to sleep. But her father came and told her she need not have the least fear. He told her to go to bed and sleep just as unconcerned as she would at her home on the shore. He said, "You may be sure all will go well for I will stand at the helm all the night thro." Just so is our wise Savior standing at the helm of our lives, he guides and directs us every part of our way. It is not for us who are passengers to meddle with chart or compass or helm, but instead we should trustingly let him guide in the way he sees best. He is so wise we can well afford to trust him.

4. Another source of comfort *is the thought of God's power.*

He is not simply loving and sympathetic and wise. One might be all of these and yet helpless to deliver. A friend might be willing to help us, and know how he might help, but be at the same time absolutely lacking in the power to help. Not so with God. He is strong. He puts underneath us the everlasting arms. Resting down in his strong arms we find sustaining strength, as well as a chance to rest our heads on his great beating heart of love. He is able to make all grace abound towards us. He is able to fulfill his promise to "make all things work together for good." In his might he controls the winds and the waves so that we are not overwhelmed. We are like the mariners in a picture we have seen. Over them are dark clouds. The winds beat fiercely. The rowers seem to be at their wits end. The waves are even dashing into their boat, and every moment threatens to be their last. But up above the cloud, in plain sight in the picture, is an angel figure,

intended to represent the Spirit or presence of God. All the time, out of sight to the rowers, God is up there "keeping watch over his own." So does he in his power protect and guide us thro the storms of life. He sees that the winds are never too fierce; that the waves beat never too high, and ever guides us with his eye.

If in any trouble of mind, body, or estate let us gather the sweet comfort there is in thoughts of God's love and sympathy and wisdom and power.

Sermons in Shoes.

"*As you go preach.*"—Matt. 10: 7.

There are two ways of preaching.

1. *By our lips.* Christ has made us his witnesses. In the first place, if we are true Christians it is our duty to be known as Christians. It is our duty to make lip confession. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, etc." Then it is our duty to actively proclaim Christ. We are to "go everywhere preaching the word." You know that dying words are cherished and dying wishes respected with a peculiar sacredness by us all. Well, when Christ knew he was about to go to his Father he led his disciples out to Mt. Olivet and told them he must leave them. It was just before His ascension, and he was speaking very tenderly and lovingly to them. And these were his very last words: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out

of their sight." Christ has taken His place at the right hand of God. He has committed His cause into the hands of men. He has promised to be with us always, but he expects every one of his disciples to be an active herald of his religion. Let us not be ashamed to teach for Christ, preach for Christ, labor for Chirst, speak for Christ everywhere we go. We men and women are His messengers.

2. *By our lives.* There is tremendous force in silent preaching. The power of the church lies in the Christ-life of its members. A good life is an argument for Christianity sixty years long, one never misunderstood, and absolutely unanswerable. It is character that tells. A true Christian is a living Bible. The majority of outsiders never read any other. They form their impressions of Christianity, not from the way it is revealed in the holy Scriptures, but from the way it is revealed *in us.* "Under whose preaching were you converted?" asked one of a young man who had recently found the Savior. "Under no one's preaching," was the reply. "I was converted under my aunt's practicing." A young minister when about to be ordained to the work of the gospel, stated, publicly, that at one period of his life he was almost an infidel. "But," said he, "there was one argument in favor of Christianty I could never refute,—*the consistent conduct of my father.*" "I tried to be a skeptic when I was a young man," said Cecil, "but my mother's life was too much for me." We talk about the importance of preaching the gospel, and it is important, but let us be assured of this one thing, that Christ's people have got to *live* the world to Christ or the world is lost. An old African once said: "A good example is the *tallest kind of preaching.*" He was right. The world needs more of what some one has called "Sermons in Shoes."

Hand Picking, or Personal Work.

Let Him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, etc. James 5: 20.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness, etc. Daniel 12: 3.

Hand-picked fruit is the best, and hand-picking is the best way to get the fruit. It is personal work that tells. It is so in religion; it is so in everything. Five minutes' private personal entreaty will often accomplish more in winning a soul to Chirst than five months' public preaching. Close work is effective. When you talk to me you mean me, and I know it. Be a committee of one. Andrew was a committee of one when he found his brother and brought him to Jesus. John followed his example. When God wanted his people delivered from Egypt, he did not send a committee; he sent a man. The church is to be multiplied by addition; and this not by wholesale, but by the addition of one after another led to Christ thro the personal work of believers.

To save a soul is to save it from a woeful death. Christian disciple, have you done such a work? Have you honestly, heartily, prayerfully, looking to God for help, directly and personally attempted to bring a soul to Christ? Have you ever used the means within your power to save one single soul from the awful peril of sin? Our personal influence is needed. We are surrounded with friends out of Christ and yet we are so very slow to give them one single word of loving persuasion. We know they would listen so kindly to any word we might say, and yet we are dumb. Does it not

seem strangely inconsistent in us? It would sometimes seem that we give our dearest friends reason to say: "No man careth for my soul." God will use us if we are willing. Men are the messengers. "He that winneth souls is wise." "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmanent, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Faults of the Tongue.

"I said, I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue." Psalm 39: 1.

This is a resolution we have all often made. It is a good one, and needs as much as any we know of to be made over and over again. The tongue is like a helm, which, tho extremely small, yet controls the life. Uncontrolled it is like a horse without bit or bridle. Unwatched it is like a fire carelessly cast among combustible shavings. "It is a world of inquity." As a little spark may lead to a mighty conflagration, so the tongue tho a small member, may start a flame that will grow until it has wrought a world of mischief. It is worse than wild beasts. They may be tamed, "but the tongue can no man tame," says the apostle James. It is "full of deadly poison." What can sting so sharply and wound so deeply as an unruly tongue?

I. Some faults of the Tongue.

1. The fault of *grumbling*. This is such a common fault that it needs no description. Yet it is a very serious fault.

2. Fault of *exaggeration*. People who would shrink

from actual falsehood and who never mean to be untruthful are yet guilty of this sin. By over-coloring and exaggeration they give false impressions. As a result they steadily reduce the confidence of their friends in them, injure their own minds and become to all practical purposes untrustworthy.

3. Fault of *detraction.* This is a sin of selfishness, of a narrow, ungenerous nature. It comes from a fear that others will be thought better than ourselves. It uses the word "But." "He is so and so, but—" "Let me tell you confidentially,—"

4. Fault of *back-biting,* or of common slander. The harm resulting from this sin is beyond repair. It is like plucking thistle-down and casting it to the wind. Slanderous stories fly everywhere and can never be gathered up again.

There are many other and even greater faults we might name, such as quarreling, lying, flattering, tale-bearing, etc.

II. SOME REMEDIES FOR THESE FAULTS.

1. *Great watchfulness.* "I said I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue."

2. *Cherishing only kindly thoughts of people.* "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If we think unkindly of people we are likely to speak unkindly of them.

3. *Turn a deaf ear to slanders;* be sure never to mention them again.

4. *Feed not the innate desire to hear ill of another.*

5. *Listen to no tale against another* which you are requested not to repeat.

6. *Beware of conversation with a tale-bearer,* or with

one who revealeth secrets.

7. Remember that "he that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him."

8. If you should hear ill of another, remember that your informant may be mistaken, misinformed, or prejudiced.

9. In any doubtful case communicate with the party before forming judgment.

10. If slander comes against you do not mind it too much. If you are free from blame you live in a castle that cannot be broken into, and you at least can use these words: "They say; what do they say; let them say!"

11. "Trust to God and do the right." Trust your reputation to him. You have committed to him your soul, commit to him your reputation.

But, personally, watch, and fight, and pray, and use every possible means to remedy any tendency to the many faults of the tongue. Oh how much happier as a place to live in this world would become if all would take heed to their ways that they should sin not with their tongues!

Rest in God.

Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. Psalm 116: 7.

The first vessel built on this continent was named "The Unrest." Ruskin, looking out upon the ocean, once exclaimed: "How shall we follow its eternal changefulness of feeling! It is like trying to paint a soul." Yes, an unsaved and unregenerated soul; which is said to resemble "a troubled sea which cannot rest." But when a soul is saved it is safe, and then it is calm. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!"

1. What restlessness there is out of God. Such a soul is like a sick man tossing with a burning fever in the night—like the wandering Jew going up and down this earth without a place to rest his feet—like "an infant crying in the night, an infant crying for the light, with no language but a cry"—like those black sea gulls outside the Golden Horn which, on account of their apparently careless motion and unending restlessness, the sailors have named "lost souls."

2. But, on the other hand, what restfulness there is in God. There is mental rest, physical rest, spiritual rest, soul rest. There is the rest of pardon, the rest of adoption, the rest of faith, the rest of assurance that all things will work together for good both for this life and the next,—all these and more have we when we find our rest in God.

Christian Conversation.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," etc.—Malachi 3: 16, 17.

Bishop Thompson says, "Some Christians are like the rivers that flow into the Artic Ocean—frozen over at the mouth." Have we not reason to suspect that the occasion in both cases is the same—coldness?

The prophet Malachi tells us of a time when "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," and goes on to say, "and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels."

1. *Christian conversation pleases God.*

It is plainly indicated that God is pleased when his people talk to each other tenderly about him; that he listens, and not only listens but makes record for future reward of all those who are so lovingly loyal.

Why are Christians to-day so dumb? Why do we hear so few sincere and loving words spoken among Christians of the One whom they profess to love above all others? Love is not a dumb or silent thing. Love speaks. Then why these sealed lips? Why this hesitation when we speak of religion? Does it not seem strangely inconsistent in us? And all the more that we are so well assured that loving conversation about him is very pleasing to God.

"The Lord harkened and heard it." He listened while his children fondly talked of him. Does it not please you to overhear some kind word spoken of yourself?

The father or mother bring home presents for their children. Does it not please the parent to hear the children in another room discussing their gifts, admiring their beauties, and telling what a kind father, what a loving mother they have? Do not think our heavenly Father indifferent to praise? He loves to see gratitude in our hearts; it greatly pleases him to hear us talking one to another about his goodness.

2. *Christian conversation blesses us.*

There is another reason for opening our lips in this way. It blesses us. Nothing does one's own heart so much good as speaking kindly of another. Expressing love ever increases it. Those Christians miss a great deal who never open their lips to speak together about Christ. Recall how, when the disciples were walking out to Emmaus, they were talking together about the Lord. Doubtless, just as we do when our dear ones are gone. How we talk together of them, recalling the loving things they said, the kind acts they did and all the pleasant memories that so increase our love. So were these disciples conversing of their dear departed Savior by the way. "And it came to pass that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near and went with them." And afterward they could say, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Talking tenderly of our departed friends almost they seem with us. Some one has pictured the spirit of a sainted mother with her unseen arms around her weeping boy, her unseen lips whispering words of comfort in his ear. Whether the picture is true to the spirit world we may not know, but we do know that

when our thoughts turn to Christ he is with us, and that when we talk together of him by the way he makes one of our number and our hearts are richly blessed.

3. *Christian conversation blesses others.*

Furthermore, Christian conversation proves a blessing not only to ourselves but to others. There are too many dumb Christians; for there is a vast power for good in our tongues if we will but use them aright. Who can estimate the power of kindly words to touch the heart and mould the life? Many a soul has been led to Christ thro the good words dropped in Christian conversation. Many a saved one could give this testimony.

"I heard Christian friends tell of raptures divine,
And I wished, how I wished, that their Saviour was mine."

Many a wayward wanderer has turned to Christ that he might find the joy and peace of which he once heard a Christian father or mother speak.

A lady was once watching her little nephew at his play. Suddenly he stopped and looked up into her face. He gazed in her face without speaking for some time. "What are you thinking about?" asked the lady. "I was wondering if you are a Christian, Auntie; are you?" "I hope so, dear," she answered. "But you never speak of Jesus. If you loved him very much would you not talk about him sometimes?" She replied, "We may love him without speaking of him." The child rejoined, "But, Auntie, you love to talk of your brothers and sisters and your friends at home, don't you? I should think if you loved Jesus very much you could not help speaking of him sometimes." How many of us speak no word for Jesus! And yet how

natural to suppose that if we loved him truly we could not help speaking of him sometimes; and all the more as we are assured that it pleases him, brings help to ourselves and blessing to others.

The Wrong Standard of Measure.

"They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise." II Cor. 10: 12-18.

We all have a tendency to take a wrong standard for character measure. People "compare themselves among themselves," and the Bible says that in so doing they are "not wise." Measuring themeslves by themselves, or by others, they soon conclude that they are "as good as the average." But average Christians is not what the Bible requires. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

1. First, then, let us bring this question of comparison, *to the testing of character.* We compare ourselves with others and say, "I am as good as ordinary Christians." What is wanted is not just "ordinary Christians." We ought each to pray with Wesley, "Lord, made me an extraordinary Christian." There is a call to-day for Christians above the ordinary. They will not be found in large numbers until people adopt a higher standard than the character of those whom they see about them. We must quit measuring ourselves by ourselves, and take the character of Christ as our standard. Like the business man comparing his

weights and measures with the great government standards, we have a true test when we compare ourselves with the true standard—the character of Christ.

He said, "Learn of me." "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Paul never told us to follow him except in so far as he followed Christ. A man five feet six inches tall comparing himself with a man five feet three inches tall might conclude that he is of quite good size, but how he does shrink when you place him beside a man six feet tall! Average Christians comparing themselves with average Christians may think they are about right, but let them compare themselves with Christ and they soon see how far they fall below measure by the perfect standard,—the character of Christ. That is the only way to hope to grow better.

2. Again, how practical this is *for testing the measure of our self-sacrifice.* Many people want to get to heaven as cheaply as they can. They give as little as possible, and then justify themselves by saying that they give as much as others. They do not deny themselves worldly indulgences and then justify themselves by saying that other Christians do the same things they do. A man sees his neighbor do certain things on the Sabbath, therefore he claims a right to do them. His neighbor goes to certain questionable places, and at once he claims the right to do the same. But how does his character measure up with Christ's requirements. "Not he that commendeth himself is approved but whom the Lord commendeth." Do you think Christ would commend your standard of character when you measure it up only by what you see in others?

3. Once more, let this serve *for testing the measure of our zeal and consecration in God's service.*

As to work. Do you compare youreslf with others? Are you ever tempted to say, "I do as much as my neighbor; I do not like to push myself forward; I never like to seem to take the lead!" Such felings are born purely of a tendency to compare ourselves among ourselves. A man says, "I go to prayer-meeting. I think I am there about as often as anybody." A woman says, "Well, I think I do about as much for the church as the minister's wife or anyone else." These are plain cases of wrong self-measurement. When we take Christ's standard we will not be asking how little we can do but how much we can do. We will perform to the extent of our ability. We will diligently use all the talents we have. We will try to be extraordinary Christians. Let us try to be the best possible Christians. Let us try to be of the utmost use in the world.

It is an old saying: "If you aim at the barn-door you will never hit the weather-cock on the steeple." That simply means that if we would hit high we must aim high. Let us quit measuring ourselves by ourselves and comparing ourselves among ourselves and aim to have a character and live a life like Christ's.

The Duty, Privilege and Benefits of Secret Prayer.

"Enter into thy closet," etc. Matt. 6: 6.

Life cannot be lived at its best in absolute solitude. Neither can it be at its best always in the company of others. Continual solitude makes us morose. Continual companionship makes us shallow. We need both society and solitude if we would be evenly developed. The requirements of religion take into consideration all the needs of our natures. In one command we are told to "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together." In another equally important command we are told to "enter into our closets and shut the door and pray to our Father which seeth in secret."

Private prayer, the secret communing of the soul with God, is a duty too much neglected, and, in these hurrying times, a privilege much undervalued by Christians.

I. THE GROUNDS FOR PRIVATE, PERSONAL PRAYER.

1. *Chist's command.* "Enter into thy closet," etc. That is enough. If we could see no reason for the exercise it ought to be enough that Christ told us to engage in it.

2. *Christ's example.* This gives much added enforcement of the duty. Christ not only told us to pray in secret but he prayed in this way himself. How often we read of him going out into the mountain, or the garden or somewhere alone to pray. If Christ needed this intercourse and comunion with his Father to fit him for and support him in his work, how much more do we?

3. *The duty grows also out of our individuality.* God thinks of us not *en masse*. He does not think of us as churches or congregations or communities, but as individuals. Our relation to him is an individual relation.

4. *It meets a deep necessity of our natures.* God knew what was best for us. He who formed us knows our needs. For example, you buy a fountain pen, a typewriter or a bicycle. The first thing you look for is a "book of directions." You believe that the man who made the machine understands it best. Certainly, then, our Creator knows our needs; and he it was who commanded secret prayer. There is no telling how vital the relation secret prayer has to our spiritual existence.

5. *All past Christian experience shows how necessary it is.* Men of prayer have been men of character. Men of prayer have been men who enjoyed high spiritual attainments.

II. SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE MANNER IN WHICH WE SHOULD ATTEND TO THIS DUTY.

1. *Have a place.* "Enter into thy closet." It is a good thing to have a place where we can resort for prayer.

2. *Have a private place.* "*Thy* closet." It is important for you to have a place where you are secure and free from any possible intrusion. We would advise parents, if possible, to give each one of their children a room of their own so that when they wish they may be alone, undisturbed and may engage in meditation and prayer free from the eye of any beholder. This privacy of prayer is suggested by the words, "shut thy door." This is to shut you in and shut God in, to

be alone with God. It is to shut out all others, to shut out hurry and business cares and all that will interfere with your undisturbed fellowship with God.

3. *Have a time.* It is wise to have a set time. Habit is a thing of great importance. It makes the duty easier and pleasanter. Besides, it is the only safe way, because if we do not form such habits we are almost sure to give up the practice of our duties thro neglect.

4. *Have a posture.* We think it wise, even in secret, to kneel in prayer. Reverence of attitude is conducive to reverence of thought.

5. *Have words.* We would advise the use of spoken words, even in private prayer. It will arouse and quicken thought. It will reveal to each soul his real self. There is a great deal of private prayer which is nothing more than reverie. Christians even sleep and dream they pray. It is better to keep alert by using spoken words.

6. *Have wants.* Bring real petitions. Ask for things to meet your needs. With God do not be hypocritical. Do not tell him falsehoods. Do not say things you do not feel. Ask no blessings or gifts you do not really want. Express gratitude for no blessings you do not feel thankful for. In all your words of adoration and confidence and love and petition be absolutely sincere and true. Your converse with God should be as free as friend with friend; and it should be entirely free from falsehood, or hyprocricy. Let the duty never be hurried over; or done only as a task. On the other hand, it need not of necessity be long. Claim the promises of God; ask in the name of Christ; be faithful, sincere, devout, and God will make his favor manifest in

an untold number of ways. He will reward openly.

Are you neglecting this duty? Duty it is, yet it is a great privilege. Resolve to value it more. Do not forget that it brings blessings. My Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." "Prayer moves the arm that moves the world." Nothing so steadies our life as faithfulness in private prayer. It gives us a calm and a force that nothing else can give. Luther once said, "I have so much to do now that I cannot get along without praying three hours a day." General Havelock, if he had to make an early march, got up an hour ahead to spend the time in prayer. It is said of William E. Dodge that he always came down among his workmen with a face shining with a glowing light obtained from an hour spent alone with God. Secret prayer is the source of happy Christian living. It is the secret of being always ready for Christian work. It is the secret of success in Christian work, and it is the secret of living victoriously, growing in grace and becoming increasingly like him, "whose we are and whom we serve."

The Law and Life of Love.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise." Luke 10: 37.

When Jesus had finished his Galilean ministry he turned his face toward Jerusalem. He knew what awaited him, but with resolution he journeyed to that city. On the way occurred the incident of his conversation with the lawyer and his answer to him given in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

I. THE INCIDENT REVEALS THE LAW OF LOVE.

The question the lawyer asked was one of supreme importance: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ answered him by saying, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" It was as tho he had said, "You are a lawyer; you are acquainted with the law; you are well versed in the law; what do you say is the law of love and the way of life?" The lawyer's great knowledge is noticable. He answering said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thy self." This was an answer Christ could commend. He said that he had given a good definition.

To love God is our duty. To love him with all the heart is to love him with an affectionate choice. To love him with all the soul is to love him with an undivided attachment—with the whole being. To love him with all the strength is to love him intensely—not as a feeble flame. To love him with all the mind is not blindly, but upon reason. Religion has its intellectual side. When we love God we ought to love him in-

telligently. The other part of this love is to love our neighbor as ourselves.

II. THE METHOD OF THE LIFE OF LOVE.

Consider some of the characteristics of true love to man.

1. It is a *universal love.* It is a love for all men because they are our fellows. Samuel Smiles tells us that he once went out in a mist and walking toward a mountain saw before him what seemed a huge monster moving. As he came nearer he saw that it was a man, and upon still nearer approach he saw that it was his own brother. When we get close to our fellow men we find that they are our brothers. The white man, the yellow man and the black man alike come in for a share of the love of those who are truly Christ's.

2. It is a *sympathetic love.* It is a feeling for and with others. You might as well try to run an engine with ice-water as to try to do Christian work without tenderness and sympathy.

3. It is a *practical love.* It is a love that does not let opportunities slip. The priest and the levite passed by on the other side. Too many of us are like children playing with sand on the sea-shore, letting it run thro their hands and between their fingers; so do we let best opportunities for doing good slip away from us. A practical love will improve opportunities and give genuine aid.

It is a *self-denying love.* The good Samaritan gave his time and his money and his effort. He denied himself to help his brother man; "Go thou and do likewise." So may you live the life of love and fulfill the law of love.

Choosing God.

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Joshua 24: 15-26.

After a long career of victorious warfare, followed by an old age of comparative repose, Joshua was now drawing consciously near to the end of his earthly life, and, like Moses before him, determined to give the assembled Israelites the advantage of his parting counsels. Well knowing the dangers that might draw them aside it was his desire to so confirm the people in the true faith and worship of God that after his death they might preserve therein.

1. *The choice set before them.*

He summoned the tribes to Shechem, recounted the great things Jehovah had done for them in the past, and in view of God's character and favors urged that they should make his service their deliberate and irrevocable choice; and upon their profession to do so made a solemn and formal covenant that they would never depart from this devotement to duty.

2. *Reasons to induce them to right choice.*

Joshua wanted the people to choose their religion rationally and intelligently. He therefore sets forth the motives which should induce them to a proper course, and then leaves the decision for them to make. In the early part of his address he had recounted, as in a panorama with scene after scene, some of the great things God had done for them and their ancestors—things such as no idol had ever done for its adherents. He urges them therefore to put away idols and reverence and worship God; and not in pretence or form, but in

sincerity and in truth.

3. *The choice made.*

Having set the choice before the people and having by his own example and many other motives urged them to a right decision, we now hear an instant and unanimous response: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other Gods." Their intellects were convinced. Their hearts were moved. They responded with the right decision.

4. *The covenant renewed.*

The people having made definite and repeated declaration that they would serve and obey God, Joshua at last took them at their word and entered into a formal covenant with them. This was probably a solemn ratification and renewal of the covenant of Sinai, but with special features applicable to the present situation. This covenant became a statute, or a part of their national law. As we read on we find that Joshua wrote all these words in the book of the law of the Lord, and set up a stone monument as a perpetual reminder of their promise on this great day.

Let us not fail to learn these facts, namely: The service of God is a matter of free choice. It is right and wise to bring every good motive to bear upon those who are making the choice. All good reasons are on the side of serving God. Good choices should be made without delay. We should do all we can to lead others to make decisions for God. We should take special care that our households as well as ourselves should serve God. Whatever others may do we should persevere in God's service while life lasts. The service of God is worthy of the most distinguished men. We must break with

sin or break with God. Repeated public confession is a help toward causing impressions to endure. Covenants are solemn things and should be remembered. Study the whole passage carefully and you will find it filled with most practical suggestions for our lives to-day.

Elements of Church Strength.

"Put on thy Strength, O Zion." Isaiah 53: 1.

Some elements of a successful church in our times:

1. *Loyalty to the truth of God's Word.* Bible teachings respecting salvation, character and duty are the standard by which the church is to be governed in accomplishing its mission. A church faithful to truth will be blessed by the truth.

2. *Intelligent Christian living.* It is good to have and believe the truth. It is better to live it. The church that lives well will succeed well.

3. *Activity in service for Christ.* The church becomes strong by practice. Putting forth strength is the way to gain strength. The church that serves God, He will honor. The working church wins.

4. *Fidelity to the church,* its worship, work, officers, membership, and its good name.

5. *Unity.* "In union there is strength." If unity and brotherly love prevail the church is irresistible.

6. *Systematic and liberal giving.* A church that gives will get. A liberal church is likely to be strong spiritually, and every other way.

Let us do everything we can that is right to make our churches strong.

Unquestioning Obedience.

"Nevertheless." Luke 5: 5.

An aged Christian lady, ripe in experience, once told us that she had heard a most helpful sermon upon the one word, "Nevertheless." We began to study the word as found in this verse, and discovered that it is the key which unlocks the meaning of this whole incident. The disciples had toiled all night and taken nothing. Christ's word came to them to launch out into the deep and let down their nets for a draught. Simon answered saying unto him, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing; *nevertheless,* at thy word, I will let down the net." And when they had thus done they inclosed a great multitude of fishes. Their unquestioning obedience was immediately rewarded.

1. *The attitude in which this word reveals the disciples to have been.*

a. It was the attitude of love. "Master, I cannot understand; I do not see the why; but you say let down your net and I will do it." It is the confidence of a servant, born of love to the Master.

b. The attitude of faith. "I seem to have reason to fear that there shall be no result. We have been toiling all night long and have taken nothing. This does not seem to be a good place for fishing, especially out here in deep water, nevertheless at thy word—"

c. The attitude was one of instant action—obedience.

We know the rich reward this act of love and faith and obedience received. There was instant return. We shall never be losers in obeying Christ. Our faith will be surprised. Christ never deceives. If we would be

as ready as these disciples to obey Christ we would, like them, be always richly blessed.

2. *This attitude of unquestioning obedience is one especially appropriate for the unconverted.*

There are those who wish to be Christians. But they say, "Master, I canot understand; I have fears as to the result; I do not see the reason for thy commands, neither do I see a way to carry them out."

Do you feel a longing in your heart to become a Christian? If so, you may learn a very helpful lesson from the ten lepers who came to Christ to be healed. They first asked Christ to heal them. He said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." They believed and began to obey. Then they experienced the blessing. "For it came to pass that *as they went* they were cleansed." In trustful obedience they experienced the healing. When they exercised faith by obeying, Christ exercised his power in healing. Oh, what multitudes of sin-sick souls fail of ever being healed, not because they do not sometimes long for it, but because they do not take Christ at his word and resolutely start out on the way of obedience! The thought in the mind of Chirst is always, "Go, and as you go I will give the blessing." But you say, "Lord, give me the blessing and then I will go." By so doing you show both lack of faith and lack of acquiescence in Christ's plan—not having faith enough to warrant Christ in healing you, and presumptuous enough to set up your will and demand a reversal of Christ's known order of action. Jesus says to you, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." But you say, "Lord, give me rest and I will come to thee." Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you and

you will find rest to your soul." But you say to him, "Lord, give me rest to my soul and I will take thy yoke."

Or it may be you allow yourself to be prevented by doubts about some of the doctrines of salvation. But Jesus says to you, "If any man will do the works he shall know of the doctrine." But you say to Christ, "Lord, explain to me the doctrines, and when these are plain I will do the works."

God says to you, "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." But you say, "Lord, make me to *feel* that you receive me and art a Father unto me and that I am a son or daughter unto thee and then I will come out from the world and be separate and confess thee before men."

There are multitudes of people who feel and act in just this way, and because they do, stop where they are and are lost. Are you longing to be healed of the leprosy of sin? You will feel Christ's healing power when you believe and go forward in instant, unquestioning obedience, but not one moment before.

3. *This attitude of unquestioning obedience is the appropriate one for all tempted, hesitating Christians failing to launch out into the deeper experience of the divine life.*

Enter into the grace of God, the peace of God, the power of God. Strive to know the blessedness of a full salvation. Strive to attain the highest character. "Covet the best gifts." Strive to make the most

blessed attainments. "Launch out into the deep." Commit yourselves to his bidding. Say, "Nevertheless at thy word, I will." In unquestioning obedience we will get the blessing.

Your Thoughts of Christ.

"But whom say ye that I am?" Luke 9: 20-27.

Christ had never put this question before. But a great crisis had arrived. Hitherto they had been left to observe for themselves; thro the sad-colored veil of his humanity they saw the glory of his divinity shine. But the hour had come for a distinct Christian confession.

I. The passage suggests first, THOUGHTS OF CHRIST'S EXALTED CHARACTER. People were talking about him. Some said that he was John the Baptist. Some that he was Elijah. Some that he was one of the prophets. This discussion was a sign that he was becoming known and his work was being noticed. But it is not enough to have such opinion of Christ. Peter answering said, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." This was a distinct confession of Christ's divinity, and the first time it was ever made. None of us can over-estimate the importance of right thoughts about Christ. We are saved by our thoughts of him. Imagine yourself one of a number of passengers on an ocean steamer. The cry is sounded that the vessel is sinking. But the announcement is also made that a staunch and commodious boat is at your service, if you will take to it. Now everything depends upon what you think of that boat. If you think there is no danger

where you are, you will not look at the boat as really needed by you. If you recognize your danger but think that the proffered boat is no more trustworthy than the sinking vessel because of your opinions about the worthy of your confidence. Refusing to accept the boat as both essential and sufficient you will be lost with the sinking vessel because of your opoinions about the boat. Do not let anyone tell you that your opinions in regard to Christ are unimportant.

Christ was indeed the Son of God. He was divine. All divine names and titles are applied to him in the Scriptures. All divine attributes are applied to him: omnisciences, omnipotence, etc. He is set forth as the object of worship for all created beings. He calls men to him, promises them forgiveness, says he will give peace and rest and will save their souls. Only a divine being can do these things; he therefore claims to be divine.

The most important thing after all is your answer to this question, "Whom say ye that I am?" It is not what the world thinks. It is not, Is he a Savior? But the real vital question is, is he your Savior?

II. This Scripture makes known, moreover, THE NATURE OF THE CLAIMS CHRIST MAKES UPON HIS FOLLOWERS.

1. He requires *self-denial.* "If any man will come after me let him deny himself." All success costs. Self-denial is necessary to you if you wish to become a great scholar, or a great painter, or if you would succeed in business. Following Christ also costs. We must deny ourselves. But bear in mind we deny ourselves only the lower things in order to attain the higher.

2. He requires also daily *cross-bearing*. The cross is the symbol of duty, even at the cost of pain. It is not the emblem of suffering, but it is the emblem of suffering for Christ's sake.

3. He requires us to *follow Him*. "Let him follow me." There is a difference between soldiers who stand uniformed and equipped, and those who are actually following the leader in a hard campaign. Our attitude must be that of a suffering servant of a suffering Lord. The picture is more like one of a servant following his Master thro any hardship or into exile. We must follow wherever he leads. We must do this even if it requires the surrender of life. But even in the loss of life let us know that we lose only the lower life and gain the higher.

III. This Scripture also tells us OF THE BLESSINGS WHICH CHRIST BESTOWS UPON HIS FOLLOWERS.

1. *Instruction.* He taught his disciples. He teaches us.

2. *Eternal life.* He who makes Christ his choice may lose all, even his life, but he will find that he has saved his real life, for the eternal life is his,—a present and an everlasting possession.

3. *Honor.* It is a small thing to own Christ before men, and in our time costs little. But it will be a great thing to be owned by Christ in the presence of his glory in the midst of saints and angels. No follower of Christ will ever be disappointed with the reward he shall receive.

Things That Keep Us From God.

"These six things doth the Lord hate," etc. Prov. 6: 16-19.

We all know that there are things that keep us from God. It may help us to avoid them if we will notice what at least a few of them are.

1. *One is a lack of a frank confession of our sins.* We cover and excuse and make allowances for the wrong things we do. But let us be honest with ourselves, honest with our fellow men, and honest with God. Let us know our own selves and not excuse our sins. "Confess your sins one to another and pray one for another." "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Let us be careful not to cover our sins, or excuse them, or apologize for them.

2. *Another is the hurry of life.* Many of us are in danger of being "jostled out of our spirituality." We scarcely take time to think. The rush and hurry of life will prevent our converse with God unless we are watchful to "live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit." There is a beautiful hymn we sing, "Take time to be holy." It takes time to be holy. We need to take time for meditation and for prayer. Meditation kindles thought and thought kindles love. "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile." Let us be watchful to take seasons for thought and communion with Christ, and for the cultivation of our spiritual natures.

3. Another thing that keeps us from God is *irregularity of spiritual nourishment.* We read God's word at very irregular intervals. We pary only occasion-

ally. We attend God's house too seldom. Instead, we ought to seek spiritual nourishment at stated times. We need communion with God as much as we need our daily bread. And there is a large power to hold us, and make us strong, in taking of regular seasons for spiritual thought and prayer and communion.

4. Another, *the attractions of worldliness.* This is a beautiful world. God wants us to be happy in it. We are in the world, but too many of us have the world in us. We are told that while in the wold we are to be not of it. It is all right for the boat to be in the water, but when the water gets into the boat the boat sinks. So when money getting and pleasure getting fill us, our spiritual life is submerged. Let us watch against reserving the best of our time and the best of our talent for self. Selfishness will certainly keep us from God.

5. Still another is *greiving the Spirit.* This good messenger, the Holy Spirit, comes to us over and over again and we do not receive Him. He points out a duty and we do not do it. He calls us to a higher life and we do not aspire or try to climb. We turn him aside. We drown his voice in the confusion of earthly things. We go on heedless of his love and of his call. In so doing we grieve him and cut ourselves away from the grace and blessing of God. "Grieve not the Spirit of God."

6. *Deliberate disobedience.* This, of course, is sure to drive us away from God. "Your sins have separated between you and God." This is always one result of sin. Sinful meditation, sinful thoughts, sinful deeds, —these we know build barriers between us and our heavenly Father. Let us guard against the things that separate between our souls and God. Let us cleave to the things that will bring us near to him.

Strong Shoes for Rough Roads.

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days so shall thy strength be.". Deut. 33: 25.

Strong shoes for rough roads, or daily strength for daily duty—this is the plain promise brought to us thro this beautiful and ever precious verse. This is a well-guaranteed promise, too. Read in the two verses following it how the promise is emphasized by having back of it God's almighty power. The promise is, "As thy days so shall thy strength be;" the assurance is, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and in his excellence of the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Trusting this promise you rest your weary head upon the bosom of Omnipotence.

1. The promise reveals to us, first, *the privilege of living by the day.* Like with the old pendulum in the fable, despair comes to many a heart when life's duties or cares or trials are looked upon in the aggregate. But this is not the right way to view life. It does not come to us all in one piece. We do not get it even in years or months, but only in days, day by day, one day at a time. Christ taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." The Christian's life is a life of trust. Bring to mind how the children of Israel lived during their wilderness journey upon the manna of God's daily bounty. They received the food "day by day," just what they needed, all they could use, but no more and no less. So this promise to us is not "as thy weeks" or "as thy months" but "as thy *days* so shall thy strength

be." That means Monday's grace for Monday, Tuesday's grace for Tuesday, and so on.

2. This promise also *rebukes in us the sin of borrowing trouble.* "As thy days so shall thy strength be." Why then borrow trouble for any to-morrow? With too many of us it is just fret, fret, fret all the time; not over actual but just anticipated troubles,—worrying over imaginary evils. As Tupper says: "It is evils that never happened that have mostly made men miserable." Like engineers on moonlight nights, worried by shadows which look like real obstructions, so many people weary themselves over imaginary evils—fighting shadows. Shakesphere says: "Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows which look like grief itself, but are not so." Stop fighting shadows. Cease borrowing trouble—"Taking trouble on interest," someone has called it—it is such folly. Besides, how can we rightly worry when we have such a promise as this, God's promise, and for the present and all time to come, "As thy days so shall thy strength be?'

3. God gave us this promise also *to fortify us for such trials as we inevitably must meet.* While it is not right to borrow trouble, yet testing times will come. Just as night follows day, so sure is suffering to come to every one of us.

> "There is never a day so sunny,
> But a little cloud appears;
> There was never a life so happy
> But has had its time of tears."

We may be surrounded by loving friends, but just as sure as we live we will witness some of them die. If we live we must part with our dearest friends; if we do

not, they must part with us. Suffering and separation and sorrow are sure to come. But God's promises are lamps to lighten up dark places. We know of no brighter one than this: "As thy days so shall thy strength be."

4. Once more, this promise *should serve to stimulate and encourage us in all Christian effort.* Some are only beginning the Christian life. Is not this a blessed assurance with which to start out on the journey? "As thy days so shall thy strength be." What more could you ask? When we look at the duties to be done and then at our poor, weak selves, it is no wonder that we are ready to cry out: "Who is sufficient for these things?" But if we will only listen we shall hear the Savior's reassuring reply: "My grace is sufficient for thee"—"As thy days so shall thy strength be."

But this is a promise not only for beginners, but for all. It is a promise as universal as God's love, as wide as his unbounding mercy, belonging to every one who will accept it. Fellow pilgrim climbing the rough and rugged steps of life, weak or strong, young or old, in sunshine or in shade, whatever your circumstances of need, take heart, take hope, take courage! "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Whatever your burdens, whatever your duties, whatever your suffering or your labor, this promise is yours, and yours for all time, "As thy days so shall thy strength be."

The Duty of Self Testing.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." II Cor. 13: 5.

One of the things Paul emphasized in this second letter to the Corinthians was his desire that they might know themselves,—test themselves to make sure they were in the faith. He was anxious that none of them should be deceived in regard to their spiritual condition.

I. THE FACT THAT WE DO NOT KNOW OURSELVES.

We do not know ourselves physically. We do not know our selves intellectually. We are far from knowing ourselves spiritually.

1. *There are those who think themselves Christians who are not.* Some are self deceived. Some are deceived by their friends. Some Satan has deceived. There are tests by which we may know ourselves, and it is our duty to learn what they are and use them.

2. *On the other hand, there are those who think themselves not Christians.* Here too self testing may be of great advantage. We know a man who lived many years out of the Church, without indulging a Christian hope, and yet by his interest in spiritual things, by the purity and usefulness of his life all who knew him were sure that he had tasted of the good word and grace of God. We have known of a woman who came to her pastor and asked that her name might be stricken from the church roll. She said that she had made a mistake and had never been a Christian. Such conditions of discouragement are sometimes due to temperament. Some people are constantly gloomy.

Sometimes it is due to physical infirmities. They are sick. Sometimes it is due to a wrong conception of what conversion is. Some people expect a wonderful "experience," and because they never have it they fail of the privilege of indulging in the hope that they are Christ's. Sometimes the gloomy view is due to the putting of false tests of Christian character. People read biographies of eminent Christians and because their lives do not come up to others they are discouraged. Examine yourselves. Test yourselves, for one thing, in order that you may know that you are a Christian and enjoy the Christian's hope; for another thing that you may thus avoid being deceived about yourself.

II. THE DUTY ENJOINED: IT IS TO KNOW OURSELVES.

Examine, scrutinize, make inquiry, use every means to learn where you really stand spiritually.

1. *Do not depend on a mere profession of religion.* Rely not on mere church membership. Joining the Church saves no one. Joining Christ saves, and you may put tests to know whether you have joined him.

2. *Never trust to a past experience.* You might be deceived by such. Trust only to a present love, a present faith, and a present activity in the service of Christ.

3. *Do not rest upon mere outward conformity to approved methods of conduct.* One can go thro the forms of religion and not be religious. Barnum's wax figures would wink and blink and seem to breathe, but there was no particle of life there. Some people go thro the motions of religion. Examine as to the commanding motives that move you in life. Is it your desire to please God or man? Examine as to the object of the

outgoing of your affections. What do you love? What do you delight in? Examine as to your constant and allowed practices. Test yourself by your walk and conversation.

III. THE DIFFICULTIES OF ARRIVING AT SELF KNOWLEDGE.

1. *Our unwillingness at heart to really know.*

2. *The love we have of sin.*

3. *Satan's quieting suggestions.* He always tells us we are "good enough."

4. *The pre-occupation of our heart and attention in worldly things.*

IV. SOME DIRECTIONS FOR SELF TESTING.

1. Do it *jealously.* Distrust your own heart; it may deceive.

2. Do it *honestly.* Keep nothing back; face your real character.

3. Do it *thoroly.* Be not hasty, partial or superficial in your inquiry.

4. Do it *frequently.* Otherwise we are liable to get astray before we know it. We are all in danger of drifting.

5. Do it *statedly.* Otherwise we are liable to neglect the duty entirely.

6. Do it *prayerfully.* Sincerely say: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

V. THE STANDARD FOR SELF TESTING.

There is but one. God's Word is the touchstone of character. It is an unerring test. Let us not compare ourselves among ourselves. That is not wise. But let us compare ourselves with the perfect standard—the character of Christ as revealed in God's Word.

VI. SOME SELF TESTS.

1. Do I love to *think of Christ?*

2. Do I love *secret prayer?*

3. Do I love the *study of God's Word.*
4. Do I love the *Church,* its meetings, and association with Christian friends?
5. Do I *find pleasure in Christian conversation?*
6. Especially, am I in *an attitude of readiness for the doing of warm-hearted, personal Christian work?*

If we put these and other such self tests we may know our own selves, whether we be really "in Christ" or not.

How to Meet Temptation.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."—Matt. 26: 41.

Life is full of peril. Satan is no superstitious myth; but an actual foe, "going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." Cunning, powerful and treacherous, he hates God and hates the good. He tempted Christ. He wanted to "sift" Peter. And he wants to sift us too. Two things he especially tries to do with us: to draw us back into his service, or, failing in that, to make us just as inefficient as possible in Christian work. To make us inefficient he first attempts to lead us into sin. Yielding to sin he knows makes cowards of us. Our cowardice discourages us in the Christian life; and once discouraged we are almost no use in Christian work, for as Mr. Moody says, "God seldom uses discouraged Christians." But Satan's real purpose is to destroy us. As Jael did with Sisera, so Satan would first put us to sleep, and then kill us.

But how are we to meet temptation? What are some

of the conditions of victory?

1. The first condition is *heart consecration—the being wholly and loyally Christ's.*

It is not difficult for a bridegroom to be faithful to his bride if he has given himself wholly, loyally and lovingly to her. Temptation is disarmed by his consecration to her and to her alone. So Satan may be very strong, but he loses his power over us when we are sanctified wholly to Christ.

2. A second condition of victory we may call *strategy.*

By strategy is the way some armies succeed in war. It is one way the Christian can succeed in the battle with Satan. Paul gives us a hint of what this means when he says: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." It is possible to have our hearts and hands so occupied with things that are good that Satan can find no place in us.

We once saw Mr. Moody at a meeting pick up a glass and, holding it before the audience, ask, "How can I get the air out of this glass?" There was no response. Reaching for a pitcher of water he poured the glass full to overflowing. He then said that every particle of air had been emptied from the glass. Just so can we keep Satan and the world and worldly things out of our hearts. It is by filling them with the things of Christ and of the Spirit. This is wise strategy. It is dispossession by pre-occupation. It is a most successful way of overcoming Satan and his wiles.

3. *Let us avoid temptations not in the path of duty.*

We pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Let us not expose ourselves to unnecessary temptations.

We know a man who professed conversion. His besetting sin had been drunkenness. But upon claiming to be converted he said he would prove its genuineness by going to the city, passing by all the saloons and coming home as sober as he went. It can be no surprise to anyone to know that, having gone in that spirit, he came home as drunk as ever. He met needless temptation, and not in the way of his duty. Pray the Lord to keep you from persumptuous sins, and carefully avoid all temptations not in the way of duty.

4. *But temptations will come; What then?*

a. Watch. Keep the citadel. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Watch every avenue by which the enemy makes his approach.

b. Pray. Pray for a way of escape if God will vouchsafe that to you. If He cannot grant you that, pray for help and strength to resist and overcome in open, face-to-face battle with the powers of darkness. Offer unwavering resistance. Men and devils may tempt, but men and devils cannot force us to yield. Luther used to say: "We cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can prevent them from building their nests in our hair." So we cannot prevent temptations from whispering in our ears, but we can prevent them from making their nests in our hearts. No one can compel us to sin; and it is possible to come out of the fiercest struggle with evil with clean hands and untarnished spirit and a conscience void of offence toward God and men. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

A Sublime Life.

"For to me to live is Christ." Phil. 1 : 21.

Paul derived his greatest bliss from his connection with Christ and from living to his glory.

Christ is the Christian's "all in all."

I. "For to me to live is Christ"—life FROM Christ. The Christian's life is life from Christ.

1. Because *secured* by Christ.. Substitution (Titus 2 : 14).

2. Because *given* by Christ. Infused into, quickening the dead soul (Eph. 2 : 1).

3. Because *maintained* by Christ. As heart to body, vine to branches, so is Christ the sustainer and support of all spiritual life (John 15 : 4, 5).

II. "For to me to live is Christ"—FOR Christ. The Christian's employment is the service of Christ. "Whose I am, and whom I serve!"

1. *Ownership.*

2. *Service.* "On duty!" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "My heart for Christ; my hands for his service." (Romans 12 : 1).

III. "For to me to live is Christ"—life WITH Christ. The Christian's joy is communion with Christ. Nothing so pleases as His presence (Luke 24 : 32). (1) In the closet, (2) In the Word, (3) In the sanctuary, (4) In the ordinances, the Christian meets Christ, sees Christ, hears His voice, feels His love, and finds delight (Sol. Song 2 : 3).

IV. "For to me to live is Christ" ought to mean for each Christian, Life LIKE Christ's.

Life from Christ, life for Christ, life with Christ,

should result in life increasingly like Christ's.

1. Brought about by *companionship.* Therefore "changed into the same image" (2 Cor. 3: 18).

2. Brought about by *following His example.* Therefore "pressing toward the mark" (Phil. 3: 12-14). "Unto a perfect man" (Eph. 4: 13; 1 Pet. 2: 21, 22). The aim: A life in purity, in gentleness, in consecration, in prayerfulness, in self-sacrificing love, in submissiveness to God's will, *like Christ's.* Highest possible ideal! Better motto than "Look up and not down," etc., and others like it better because there is more Christ in it. Let us make it our own: Life *from* Christ, life *for* Christ, life *with* Christ, life *like* Christ's.

Keeping Ourselves in the Love of God.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God," etc.—Jude 21.

In order to keep ourselves in a loving attitude towards God there are some things to be avoided and some things actively to be done.

I. THINGS TO BE AVOIDED.

Let us shun carefully everything that would be likely to dampen the fervor of our affections or extinguish the holy fire. If we have taken Christ as our Master let us follow Him. When a dog is following two men their parting shows which is master. Sin and holiness do not proceed along the same road. We must choose which way we will go.

1. *Avoid the indulgence of a worldly spirit.* We have read of a boy who tied his horse to his arm. The horse ran away and the boy was much injured. We must hold

the world so loosely that it can never drag us with it.

2. *Never parley with temptation.* Temptation is an enemy outside the castle gate seeking by persuasive words to gain an entrance, but when once we let it in we will find it a Trojan horse full of armed men to overcome us.

3. *Never compromise with sin.* Never say, "I will choose the least of two evils." Choose neither. Because it was cold the camel asked the Arab to let him put his head into the door of the tent. There being no hindrance he got in with his fore feet. Then with his whole body. "Hold," said the Arab, "There is not room enough for two." "Then," said the Camel, "you had better get out." That is the way it always ends. Compromises with sin are always dangerous.

II. THINGS TO BE DONE.

Religion is not a series of "don'ts." We cannot pump darkness out of a room. It cannot be baled out; open the windows and let in the light! So we cannot force evil out of the soul except by letting God in. What are some of the things that let in light to the soul?

1. *Prayer.*

2. *Study of the Bible.*

3. *Meditation.*

4. *Association with Christian companions.*

5. *The preserving of a tender conscience.*

6. *The engaging humbly and heartily in every form of Christian service.* If we would keep ourselves in the love of God, we must cultivate the graces and imitate Him in deeds of mercy and loving kindness.

How to Have an Ingathering of Souls.

"If my people, shall humble themselves, and pray, then will I hear from Heaven," etc. II Chron. 7:14—16.

1. *Let us ask for it.* If we wish the blessing it is as little as we can do to ask for it. "Ask and ye shall receive." Before we can have an ingathering of souls our churches and people must be aroused to an earnest spirit of prayer and supplication. Doubtless we might experience another pentecostal blessing in answer to another pentecostal season of earnest prayer. Prayer is God's appointed means for obtaining. Prayer is the channel thro which our blessings come. Oftentimes our churches are like some inland city in the winter, on the banks of a frozen stream. We are the dwellers in that city, hungering and starving for food. Scores of richly laden vessels are lying in the stream a few miles below, anxiously waiting to reach our wharves. But why the delay? It is because the channel is closed by the ice. So it is often in regard to God's blessings for his Church. He is not only willing but waiting to bestow them upon us. Why then do they not come? The reason is plain. Our prayers are the channel the appointed channel, thro which every good must come, but the channel is not open. Oh, how often do our churches fail to keep the channel clear. How often are we in want and miss the blessing because the stream is frozen and God does not come thro the ice?

2. *Let us expect it.* This means faith. Faith is the hand that takes the blessing. One reason we do not receive more is because we do not expect more. Think what poor feeble faith we have! How often we are

like those Christians praying for Peter. Recall the scene. The disciples were gathered together praying for Peter's release from prison. While they were praying he knocked at the door. But they would not believe it was Peter. He continued knocking. When they opened the door and saw that it was indeed he, they were astonished. Think of it! The Church praying—God answering—and the people "astonished!" Oh, how often it is so still! Think of our poor weak faith. Often it is that Chist, consistently with his own character, really cannot do many mighty works in our churches, because of our unbelief. Instead, we ought to ask great things and expect great things from his hand. He says "According to your faith be it unto you." It is as if one very rich were to hand us a blank check with his name signed and say: "Now, fill it out yourself, write in the amount you would draw, and according to your faith in me be it unto you." We might hesitate to make too large a draft upon an earthly friend, but there is no need to draw lightly upon God,

> "For his grace and power are such,
> None can ever ask too much."

God is far more willing to bless us than we think he is. If we really wish an ingathering of souls in our churches, let us ask for it and get our people to asking for it; let us expect it and get our people to expecting it. God will honor our prayers and our faith.

3. *Let us work for it.* Living faith is a practical faith and goes to work. "Faith without works is dead." But a living faith is a working faith. It believes there is a human side as well as a Divine side in God's plan for the accomplishment of his will. Faith never prays,

"Lord, put grain into my barn." Faith ploughs and sows and prays: "Lord, bless effort." So when we have a part given us to do that is useless prayer which does not try to answer itself as far as possible. True faith is practical, and practicable faith unites prayer and effort. Do you want to see Christians grow in grace, sinners saved and the gospel of Christ prevail as never before? Then pray. Then expect the blessing. Do not contradict your faith by not expecting the blessing. God never said: Ask to see whether I will give. He does say, "Ask and ye shall receive." If we use the means and do our duty it is sure as God is God and his word is truth that we shall never be disappointed. "If thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth."

What is a Christian?

"And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch"—Acts 11: 26.

Following the martyrdom of Stephen the disciples were widely scattered by persecution. But everywhere they went they preached the gospel of Christ. The hand of the Lord was with them and multitudes believed. In Antioch, especially, converts were made in great numbers. Possibly in derision, here the name was bestowed upon them of "Christians." "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

While the question as to how they came to be called by this name, and why, is an interesting one, we wish now to speak only on the more vital theme as to what a Christian really is.

1. *A Christian is one who has accepted Christ as a personal Savior.*

We call ours a Christian nation, but in reality it is not. We speak of ours as a Christian community, but in the strict sense it is not. People do not like to be called by the name Mohammedans or heathens or infidels and so we usually speak of our people as Christians. The name has become acceptable and the people are pleased to be classed under it. But to belong to a Christian civilization does not make one a Christian. To be really a Christian is a very different thing than to be called by the name. The becoming a Christian implies a personal transaction between the soul and Christ. A Christian is one who realizing his sinful life and lost condition has put his trust in Christ for salvation.

2. *A Christian is one who bears the name of Christ.* At least he ought not to be ashamed to confess Christ by open avowal. "If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed." Take the name. Abide by it come what may on that account.

Then, too, be careful not to dishonor the name.

Alexander the Great is said to have had a soldier in his army of the same name as himself. The soldier became known as a great coward. Alexander sought him out and commanded him: "Either change your name or change your conduct." Bearing the name of Christ we should strive ever to bear it worthily. "Let him that nameth the name of Christ be careful to depart from iniquity." Let us remember, too, that the name is a binding name, and involves the recognizing of brotherhood with all who have like precious faith with ourselves. If we are Christians we are one with all, the world over, who strive to serve our common Master.

3. *A Christian is one who is trying to follow in Christ's way.* He studies to know Christ's will and to do it. He is a learner in Christ's school. But he tries faithfully to improve. He may not succeed as well as he would like, but he "presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He is a disciple trying ever to catch the spirit of his Master. And it does not contradict his profession, either, that he so often comes short of what he aims to do or be. People may expect perfection of him. They may ridicule him when he fails. But all the same he is known of his Master as one who is faithfully trying to be what he would have him be and do what he would have him do.

4. *A Christian is also one who is enlisted in the cause of Christ.* He not only strives to be himself like Christ, to heed his instruction and imitate his character, but to actively promote his cause. He enlists heartily in his service. He strives also to get others to enlist. Saved himself he strives to save others. He does all the good he can, to all the people he can, in all the ways he can, as long as ever he can. He does it because he loves both his Master and his Master's cause. Christ's interests become his interests; Christ's cause becomes his cause; Christ's glory becomes his glory.

5. *A Christian is one who will be admitted to heaven.* Having accepted Christ, Christ will accept him in glory. Having acknowledged Christ, Christ will acknowledge him before the angels in heaven. Having tried to follow Chist's way, Christ will bring him entirely into that way thro the character development of heaven. Having enlisted in the cause of Christ, Christ will give him part in the final triumph. Indeed, having been "faithful unto death" Christ will give him that "crown of life" which he has reserved for all that love Him.

Our Warrant for Prayer.

"Ask and it shall be given unto you," etc.—Matt. 7: 7-11.

I. WHAT PRAYER IS. It is not a simple petition, but includes all the exercises of our converse with God. As the expression of our feelings in view of His greatness and glory, it takes the form of adoration. As the expression of our feelings in view of His goodness, it takes the form of thanksgiving. As the expression of our feelings in view of our sins and sinfulness, it takes the form of confession. As the expression of our feelings in view of our numerous wants, it takes the form of petition.

This converse with God may be solemn and formal, as when we approach Him in the closet, in the family circle, or in the gatherings of God's people in His sanctuary. On the other hand, it may be occasional and ejaculatory; or it may be just the unuttered aspirations and longings of the soul toward God, like the constant ascent of a flame heavenward. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

No better definition of prayer is found in literature than in that wonderful hymn of James Montgomery, beginning,

> "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
> Uttered or unexpressed," etc.

II. OUR WARRANT FOR PRAYER.

1. *It is found especially in God's promises.* "Ask, and ye shall receive." "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." Matt. 21: 22. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do,

that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it." John 14: 13,14.

What did the Lord mean when He spoke the parable of the friend at midnight, also of the importunate widow? Think over these passages. If this is not encouragement to pray, words have no meaning at all.

2. *Another warrant is found in God's Father-love.* If we are His children and He is our Father we have reason to believe that He will listen to our plea and give us everything needful.

3. *Still another warrant exists in God's nature.* He cannot deceive, and His nature is pledged to hear and answer and bless His people.

III. THE ATTRIBUTES OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

These may be learned by noticing some of the things that prevent our prayers being answered.

1. *A man's head may be wrong.* "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law even his prayer shall be an abomination." Prov. 28: 9.

2. *A man's faith may be wrong.* "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11: 6.

3. *A man's purpose may be wrong.* "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 4: 3.

4. *A man's heart may be wrong.* "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66: 18.

There are many other conditions, faith, submission, obedience, closeness of walk with God, etc. Prayer is the way to get blessings. Prayer is the way to strengthen our graces. The time may be delayed, the manner

may be unexpected, but sooner or later, in some form or other, the answer is sure to come. Not a tear of sacred sorrow, not a breath of holy desire poured out in prayer to God will ever be lost; but in God's own time and way it will be wafted back again in clouds of mercy and fall in showers of blessings on you and those for whom you pray.

The Du y of Co-operation in Church Work.

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," etc. Eph. 4: 16.

Paul here uses the idea of the growth of the human body to illustrate growth of the Church. He says that the Church makes increase of itself only "according to the effectual working in the measure of every part."

1. *Each part must do its share.*

In the body there are nerves, bones, blood-vessels and other parts innumerable, and each of these has a special function; so has God given to every member of his Church some special functions with special work to do. The whole body is "fitly joined together"—no part is expected to do the work of any other part. No part can do the work of any other part.

2. But in this figure of the body's growth and functions there is still another thought—that *each part must work in conjunction with all the rest.*

It is not enough that each part should do some work, but it must be co-operative work. The whole body is "fitly joined and compacted" in order that it may be

suitably increased by that which every joint supplieth;" the whole growing by every part growing. This rule, applied in the individual Church, would mean that while it might have one or more pastors it would have just as many workers as there are members. The minister with a church of one hundred members, would have just one hundred devoted helpers, or, of five hundred members, five hundred helpers; all together working "in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." No pastor can do his people's work. No Christian's life can be lived by proxy. If your work is done by some one else, your work is not done at all. You may be small, but no one else can fill your place. "All at it, all at it," is the rule.

3. *There is work for all and all can work.*

Take for suggestiveness the building of the temple at Jerusalem. The plan of the building was given by God Himself, and was committed to master-builders of his own choosing. Their business was to see how every stone was laid, and that all the vast multitude employed did their work faithfully. But all the people were enlisted in the work. Some were cleaning off and levelling the foundation; others were on the mountain-sides quarrying the rocks; others were squaring them to the size directed; others were engaged in hauling them to the building; others were raising them to the appointed place; others making mortar and carrying it to the builders; while even the women and children were doubtless engaged in combing the wool and camel's hair and making the curtains and fringes. The whole church was at work—co-operative work—all energies

directed to the one great end. The result was the most magnificent building the world has ever seen. That was practical lay co-operation, and what the Church of Christ needs to-day is more of it. It is only as every man finds his work and strives to do it that the Church will leap forward with sudden, mighty and victorious strides toward her day of glory.

Now, the grand triumph of the kingdom is coming, we may be sure of that; but it is to be hastened only as all God's people arouse to do their part. Not simply as the watchmen on the walls of Zion do their duty, but as the multitudes of the saved go out after the multitudes who are not saved. What is needed is more of that life-giving, vitalizing fire of God's Holy Spirit which will arouse every individual Christian to earnest, consecrated, soul-winning work. "Every Church a band of missionaries" is the title we have seen of a tract. We have never read the tract, but the title is very suggestive. A good deal has been said of late about the importance of having "able ministers" in our pulpits, and no doubt it is important. But might it not be well to call the attention of the members of our churches to the fact that it is more important that they should be able workers then that they should have able pastors; especially such as fill that popular idea of men usually gifted as public speakers and sermonizers? Only as our churches become bands of missionaries—only as they become bands of "able workers," in fact only as the rank and file of Christians are enlisted in active service for Christ, will His kingdom advance as it ought.

The Constraining Love of Christ.

"The love of Christ constraineth us." II Cor. 5:14.

An incident is related of a man who, before the war, traveling in the South, became much interested in a young colored girl, purchased her from her master and gave her her liberty. After the bargain had been made with her owner the man found difficulty in getting the girl to realize that she was actually free. At last it did dawn upon her what it all meant, but instead of exulting in her new-found liberty, she exclaimed: "Oh, he redeemed me; I will follow him; I can never thank him enough; I will serve him all my life!" She did accompany him to his Northern home, and as people marked her loving attention to every wish of her new-found friend it seemed her ever-efficient reply, "He redeemed me! He redeemed me!"

So have we as Christians One who ransomed us. He is our Redeemer, our Savior, our Friend. He died that we might live. Is it strange, then, that realizing all this we should often say, "The love of Christ contraineth us?" Here is the true spirit of consecration, which lifts our lives above the compulsion of "must" to the region of a glad and willing-hearted service.

1. First, the love of Christ *is the constraining motive under which we enter the Christian life.*

This is what Christ referred to when He said: "I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me." No one can stand before the cross, realizing that the Sufferer is dying for him and not be moved. "We love Him because He first loved us." That hymn we so often sing pictures exactly what passes thro the soul of the sinner

in sight of the cross. Standing with eyes upon the Divine Sufferer he exclaims:

"Alas! and does my Savior bleed
And does my Sovereign die;
Does he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

Is it for crimes that I have done
He groans upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!,"

But in sight of such love as that a new impulse takes possession of him, and he exclaims:

"But depths of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe
Here, Lord I give myself to Thee,
'Tis all that I can do."

This is the spiritual analysis of thousands upon thousands of conversions. The love of Christ is the constraining motive under which we enter the Christian life.

2. This love, too, *is the inciting motive under which we are led to an open confession and acknowledegment of Christ.*

This impulse may find illustration by the case of a soldier at the battle of Williamsburg. He had the artery of his arm severed by a fragment of a shell and was fast bleeding to death. His life could be saved in a moment if some one would but bind up the artery. He saw a surgeon riding at a distance. Lifting his hand he called to him for help. The doctor dismounted and gave the needed relief. As he started to go the man exclaimed: "Doctor, what is your name?" "Oh! no matter about that," was the reply. "But, doctor, I want to tell my wife and children who saved me!" Just so,

when Christ comes to us, binding up our broken hearts, healing our wounded spirits, and saving our dying souls, is it any wonder that there comes a longing desire to tell others what He has done for us and openly confess Him everywhere? "The love of Christ constraineth us." It should never be a hard, but a very glad and happy thing to openly acknowledge and confess our Savior.

3. Again, love is *the impelling motive back of all self-denial, self-sacrifice and labor for Christ.*

The true Christian does not give up sinful indulgences because he must, but because he wants to do so. The love of Christ constraining, he desires to deny himself for Christ's sake. Self-sacrifice for Christ becomes pleasure and work for Him the highest delight.

Growth in Grace.

"But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."—II Peter 3: 18.

A living thing ought to grow. No growth, no life, is the rule. If as Christians we do not grow then either we have become formalists, having "a name to live but dead," having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof," or we have gone back into the world and have become as bad or worse than we ever were.

I. THE NATURE OF GROWTH IN GRACE.

1. *It is gradual.* One does not become perfected in Christian life suddenly. It is a progressive development.

2. *Its foundation is knowledge.* It is as we grow in

the knowledge of Christ and acquaintance with Him that we grow in likeness to Him.

3. *It ought to be constant.* In religion we cannot depend on changeful frames and excitement. But we ought increasingly to be "strengthened by might in the *inner* man." This will come by attention to every means of grace, the private acts of devotion, the public worship of God's house, Christian activity, etc.

II. SOME SIGNS OF GROWTH IN GRACE.

1. *The seeing of our sins.* A growing Christian will become increasingly conscious of sin. Such an one is tempted sometimes to think that he is even growing worse every day. In a room full of loathsome things where one ray of light is admitted, we see a few of them: when more light comes in we see more of the horrors. So if we are seeing more of the sinfulness of our hearts each day, it is a sign that increasing spiritual light is being admitted.

2. *Increasing watchfulness against sin.* If we find ourselves guarding against our besetting sins with new determination, watching against our peculiar temptations and striving to overcome them, it is another sign that we are growing in grace.

3. *Growing self-denial of personal indulgence.*

4. *Growing conscientiousness.*

5. *Increasing spiritual mindedness.*

6. *Bearing injuries with patience and meekness.*

7. *Increasing desire for the salvation of others.* . .

8. *Growing dependence upon God's promises, especially* in hours of darkness and trials.

9. *A desire for God's glory.*

By these signs anyone can test whether he is really

growing in grace or not.

III. How to grow in grace, or make progress in the Christian life.

1. *Aim to do something to that end every day.* The mistake we are liable to make is of making general resolutions to do good without carrying them out in particular directions.

2. *Remember that your dependence is on the Holy Spirit;* therefore pray much. Make personal effort as if all depended upon you; at the same time pray as if all depended upon God.

3. *Study the Bible.* Take time to study. Take time to meditate upon it. Sit at Jesus' feet and learn of Him."

4. *Practice self-denial every day.* Be watchful against conformity to the world. Do not give up to your appetites and passions. Be not self-centered.

5. *Resolve to do more, work more, give more, etc.* There are a great many hindrances to growth in grace that we ought to guard against. Worldly companionship; too deep engrossment in business; the giving of too much importance to our own pleasure and amusement; the walking on the verge of dishonesty; relapse into known sin; such things greatly hinder the Christian's growth. There is danger when we step back of our falling. Like the painter making a frescoe on a building, stepping back to admire he became so engrossed that he forgot that he was high on a scaffolding. He fell to the bottom and was killed on the marble pavement below. Be careful not to be so interested in other things as to forget your obligations to God.

Communion With Heaven.

"And he dreamed and behold, a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to Heaven. Gen. 28: 12.

Jacob had grossly deceived his old father Isaac, and defrauded Esau, and now must flee for his life. He came to Bethel, which was called Luz, at the first. This was a place twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Out under the skies on the barren hill-side he laid him down to sleep, taking of the stones that lie so plentifully about for a pillow. He was a fugative man, fleeing from the wrath of his brother. He was a solitary man, unattended by servant or camel. He was a weary man, for he had traveled fifty long miles that day. He was a guilty man, conscious of having wronged another. Is it any wonder then that his was a restless slumber? And with such restlessness, is it any wonder that he dreamed? "And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven."

1. *Restlessness is due to distance from God.* The whole world is broken of its rest by a sense of distance from God. The thing that made Jacob most deeply anxious was the thought of guilt, and therefore, of alienation from God. The heathen uniformly think of placating their gods. We all retain a hope of in some way retaining God's favor. It is said that we dream of what we were last thinking of before we went to sleep. What Jacob wanted was communion with God, and so he dreams of an open way to it.

2. *The main meaning of the ladder symbol.* It was a symbol of communication between earth and heaven. In it Christ was pre-figured. Here is the Gospel in

the Old Testament. Here is the parable of the Prodigal son foreshadowed. Here is revealed God's saving love.

a. A ladder is a symbol of possible salvation. A ladder suggests use in a perilous emergency. Here is a sinking ship; from the side a ladder is thrown to reach the life-boat. Here is a burning house, up the side a ladder is run for the rescue of souls. A ladder is intended for immediate use. Here then, is the Gospel "now" back in the Old Testament.

b. A ladder suggests communion. Here to Jacob was the way of communication with heaven. Here was nearness to God. Here was opportunity for intimate converse with the spiritual. This is the thought caught by the writer of that wonderful hymn "Nearer my God to thee."

3. *This occurance tells us that the Christian's career is upward.* The lower end of the ladder was on the earth and the ladder reached to heaven. It ended at the throne. So the Christian is always stepping away from the old up to the new. He is mounting toward God. He is climbing the ascent of God. Our ascent, of course, is gradual, step by step.

> "Heaven is not reached by a single bound,
> But we build the ladder by which we rise
> From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
> And we mount to its summit round and round."

4. *The value of a vision of God.* Looking up at the sun and then down to the earth we see the sun everywhere. We cannot look into the face of God and then forget it. Jacob never got away from this vision. Thirty years after he came back and built an altar on this spot. The recollection stayed with him. So it is

with us when once we have had a higher vision of God. We carry it with us thro a life-long journey, and it influences our every act.

5. *The value of spiritual dreaming.* A high ideal once presented to us continues to be a help toward a high life. This was a time of spiritual exaltation to Jacob. God showed him wonderful possibilities for future pure and holy living, coupled with aspirations heavenward. He felt the influence of this dream thro his life. So God gives us spiritual dreams, times when he shows us high ideals, and then, as to Moses in the mount, he says: "See that thou make it in all things after the pattern shown thee in the mount." Let us try to make our lives come up to our best dreams.

Peter's Downward Steps.—A Warning.

"And there was also a strife among them," etc.—Luke, 22:24-62.

The Bible teaches not only by precept, but by example. When it would inculcate faith we have a catalog of faith-filled men, as in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. So are we warned of the danger of denying Christ by the example of Peter. Satan still desires to "have" souls that he may "sift" them.

Peter's fall was not altogether sudden. It was not accompished in him by a single act of apostacy. It was a cumulative result. Something led up to it. As some one has said, "Men fall as trees do, by becoming rotten at the heart." There must be some weakening process of decay leading up to a Christian's fall. In Peter's

case that process is clearly traced. Let us note its progressive downward steps.

1. We see him with the other disciples *quarreling among themselves as to who should be greatest.* The indulgence of such a spirit in the Christian always leads to worse things. Christ rebuked this sin in them, and taught them a lesson of humility. He told them they could be great only by being great servants. He said the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but impressively added, "It shall not be so *among you.*" Among his disciples greatness was to be measured by serviceableness.

2. *We find him in the face of tenderest and most direct warning, self-confident and boasting.* He said, "I am ready to go with Thee both unto prison and to death." Another evangelist puts it even stronger: "Tho all men should deny Thee, yet will not I." But how little he knew his own weakness! How utterly he overestimated his own strength! And this very confidence in self, in the face of warning, is always a sign of weakness and sin in the soul. Bravest soldiers turn white as they go into battle. Only cowards enter thoughtlessly. "Put no confidence in the flesh." Peter was too self-confident.

3. We see him *sleeping while his Master is wrestling with the powers of darkness in the garden.* Christ came to them and said, "Why sleep ye? rise and pray lest ye enter into temptation." Sleeping was not a very promising sign of superior devotion. Here Peter shows that he was no stronger than others.

4. We see him *following his Master afar off.* Is this the man who was ready to go to prison and to death

with him? who was going to stand by him tho all men forsook him? He has certainly gone back not a little. "Afar off" portends worse things to come. It is away from the source of inspiration and strength.

5. Still another step, we see this disciple *sitting down among Christ's enemies and warming himself at their fire.* And this, too, while Christ was undergoing shameful treatment. It is bad for any of us when we take our places among Christ's enemies, when we warm ourselves at their fires,when we "sit down among them." When we act with them we are counted with them, and we are in a current that is hard for us to stem.

6. One step more: We are prepared to see him take it—*that last, headlong, miserable plunge of denial.* Three times he denied him, each time in more shameful way than the last, until he added cursing and blasphemy to his lying. How rapid the descent! How complete the fall! How base the desertion, and this at the time of Christ's extreme need!

Learn the immeasurable peril of just one act of wrong doing.

Learn how commonplace in seeming is even the most notable sin.

Learn that one denial makes a fatal facility for doing it again.

Remember that there is repentance unto life. Such repentance Peter afterwards showed.

Our Need and Our Supply.

"My God shall supply all your need, acording to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Phil. 4: 19.

Paul and his colleagues were poor. The Philipian Christians had met some of their wants, and Paul declares his firm belief that God would enrich them for it out of the glorious treasures of his providence and grace. "My God," etc. This has been calied "The Believer's Banknote." It is good for blessings for body and soul. for time and eternity.

1. *The Christian's needs.* "Shall supply all your needs."

This is not a promise that God will gratify all our wishes or whims. He will supply what he sees to be our needs. It is the same thought as the Psalmist had when he said that the Lord being his shepherd he should not want anything really good for him. But how many our real needs are: Needs for the body, needs for the soul, needs for our families, needs for the present, needs for the future, needs for time, needs for eternity; our needs are as many as our moments. Every sincere Christian can say with the saintly Gotthold, "My soul is like a hungry and thirsty child, and I need His love and consolation for my refreshment; I am like a wandering and lost sheep, and I need him as a good and faithful shepherd; I am a feeble vine, and I need his righteousness; I am in trouble and alarm, and need his solace; I am ignorant, and I need this teaching, simple and foolish, and I need the guidance of his Holy Spirit; in no situation, and at no time can I do without Him."

2. *The source of supply.* "My God, shall supply.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." God will supply all our needs. Nobody else can. He can. Paul's God is the God of providence. "He openeth his hand and supplieth the wants of every living thing." He is also the God of grace. "My grace is sufficient for thee." He is also the God of Heaven. He has wonderful riches in reserve there.

3. *The measures of supply.* "According to his riches in glory."

God is a glorious giver. Whatever he does is done in a way worthy of himself. He gives in a style that becomes his wealth, (what the rich of earth do not frequently do). He gives like a king—according to his riches. Sometimes his blessings seem too much for us to receive; but he reassures us by saying that they are not too much for him to give. The "riches of his grace" are the treasures of the Bank of Heaven, to which all believers have free access, and for all time. Jesus told his disciples to ask, that their joy might be full. We might hesitate to make too large a draft upon an earthly friend, but there is no need to draw light upon God.

> "For his grace and power are such
> None can ever ask too much."

4. *The medium of this supply.* "By Christ Jesus." Christ is God's only begotten and well beloved son, therefore nothing is too good, nothing too great to give for his sake. Thro Christ we have atonement, thro Christ we have a channel of communication with God. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. All

the promises of God are in Him "yea and amen," and only in Him. Everything thro Christ, and nothing without him. When that name is mentioned the gates of heaven, and of all heavenly benediction, fly open.

The Folly of Formalism in Religion.

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Timothy 3: 5.

There are frequent warnings in the Bible against the folly of formalism. It is useless to have a mere "form of godliness" if our lives "deny the power thereof." Remember,

1. *Church-membership is not religion.* "Only the dead who live in this parish are buried here." This is the sign which we are told is posted at the entrance of a graveyard in Ireland. Is there a covert truth slyly suggested by this specimen of an Irish bull? We wonder if any inference is intended as to the dead church-members who live in the parish, flourishing on the church-roll, numerical units, serving the ends of the church only so far as counting heads is concerned, but so far as any real usefulness is concerned "as dead as a door nail"—and that is as dead as anything can be.

2. *Movement is not life.* We are reminded of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones. At one point in the vision the bones came together. Then the flesh covered the bones, and the skin covered the flesh. There were the physical organisms complete. At first glance they may have appeared to be alive, but they were not. Just

so the Bible, speaking of some professors of religion, says that they have the form of godliness, but are lacking the power thereof; and of some churches says that while they have a "name to live" they are really "dead." There are skeleton churches, well organized, financially and numerically in good condition, but lacking in the one all-important thing—spiritual life. And it is to be feared that in all our churches there are skeleton Christians. They make a profession of religion. They go thro the motions of religion. They have the forms of godliness, but lack the one essential—life.

3. *Appearance is not always reality.* A man's zeal in the external ritualism of religion may be no sign whatever of true inward devotion and spiritual heart-throbs. There is far too much of religious life that is like the practice of marking time among soldiers. They lift up one foot, and then put it down in the same place. They are marching but they are not moving. In fact, they are but going thro the motions of a march. So it is with many professing Christians. They are but "marking time," going thro the motions of the Christian life. Some years ago we heard a great deal of talk about Barnum's Siamese twins. They appeared to be alive. They would move and breathe, and wink and blink, but on closer inspection it was found that this was all done artificially. There was no particle of real life. Just so there are wax-work Christians. They wink and blink, breathe and move, but it is all artificial. Life, spiritual life, is lacking, and therefore all is lacking. It is all a sham. For appearance counts for nothing with God unless the real substance is there.

4. *God cannot be deceived.* It is related of the

Queen of Sheba that she sent two wreaths of roses to Solomon. One was real, the other artificial. To test his reputed wisdom she defied him to detect the genuine from the artificial. Solomon at once directed that some bees be brought into the room. Immediately they flew to the real flowers, and ignored the counterfeits. So it is that while the world may not always see the difference between the real Christian and the artificial one, yet God recognizes at once by the hidden life and inner sweetness of the spirit, and well knows the difference between form and substance, between skeleton and life. Let us be true and genuine in our religion.

Lovest Thou Me?

"Lovest thou me?" John 21 : 16.

I. CONSIDER THE FEELINGS OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN TOWARD CHRIST. A true Christian is not simply a baptized person, a church-member, a respecter of religion, but he is a person who has some definite relations toward Christ. He trusts Christ as his only hope of salvation. He hopes in Christ as the one who fulfills his expectations. He follows Christ as his example and the one who will lead him to heaven. And, above all, he loves Christ; he has a personal attachment to Him, and a delight in Him, in His will, in His success.

Love indeed, is the mainspring of all service to Christ. The heart must be enlisted before the hands will move. The true Christian says, "The love of Christ constraineth me." Where this love is lacking there may be, indeed, excitement, enlistment, interest

for a time, but no patient continuance in well doing. Love is the secret of the Christian's persistence in well doing. The soldier fights best who has love for a commander, or a cause. There may be, and usually is, a great difference between the interest of a nurse who, as a stranger, is employed to care for a sick child and the feelings and attention of the mother. It is love that constrains the mother and leads to highest devotion.

II. How this love to Christ makes itself known.

1. If we love Him we will like to *think* about Him. It is the characteristic of love that it likes to dwell in thought upon the object of its love. So a true Christian will not forget Christ,—Christ's wishes, Christ's cause, Christ's honor. Love will bring often recurring thoughts to our Savior and attention to His will.

2. If we love Him we will be glad to *hear* about

> "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
> In a believer's ear."

Him. We like to hear of those whom we love.

3. If we love Him we will be glad to *read* about Him.. We always rejoice to receive a message from an absent child, a husband or friend. So the messages Christ sends will be the Christian's delight.

4. If we love Him we will *try to please* Him. This is a trait of love; it always considers what will gratify the loved one. If we love Him we will try to do the things He will approve. We will strive not to do things He disapproves. Love does not murmur that Christ's requirements are strict; it is scarcely aware that they are: "The yoke is easy and the burden light." This is because of love.

5. If you love Him you will *love His friends.* This is a well known trait of love. We love our friends' friends.

6. If we love Him we will be *very careful of His good name and honor.* This is another universal sign of love.

7. If we love Him we will love to *talk to Him,* and be with Him! This is why Christians go to places where He is found. It is also a reason why they look forward with delight toward Heaven.

Test yourselves. Do you love Him?

Strategy.

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21.

It is hard to get sin out of our lives by main force. The better way is to use the divine startegy of overcoming evil with good.

1. *Let us apply this thought to our thinking.*

We are all conscious of being frequently beset with evil thoughts. There is evil within us to suggest them. There is evil from without to force them upon us. There are laws of association by which when we think of one thing, some other thing, possibly evil is suggested. When does an evil thought become to us personally a sinful thought? The old theologians used to analize this subject under three heads. First, suggestion; second, delectation; third, consent. Even Christ had evil thoughts. Satan tempted him with the suggestion of turning stones into bread, of casting himself

down from the pinnacle of the temple, etc. The mere suggestion is not sinful, but our thoughts become sinful at the point of declaration. When Mr. Evil Thought comes along and knocks at the door of the heart and we say, "Come in; I am glad to see you; take a chair; don't be in a hurry; don't go." When any one is in this attitude towards evil thoughts he is in a sinful attitude. "You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head, but while you have hands you can keep them from building nests in your hair." We are responsible for harboring evil thoughts even tho we will not consent to the deed they suggest. How, then, are we to manage evil thoughts? We may set our teeth and say with determination: "I will not harbor them." But we can scarcely keep up such determination. We will find it hard work. There is a better way. Fill your minds with the things that are good and beautiful and true and the evil will find no place in you. By this strategy you will not be overcome with evil but will overcome evil with good.

2. *Let us apply this suggestion to our reading.*

Much criticism is made of the reading people choose in these days. Some seem to think they can afford to occupy their time in reading books that in their secret hearts they know are evil. People will read. If unworthy books are at hand we are liable to occupy our time with them and create a taste for such trash. Especially in dealing with children and young people ought we to recognize the value of the strategy we are considering. Possession is by dispossession. Put in the good and the evil will be kept out. Use strategy.

3. Apply the thought again *to our pleasure-seeking.*

It is foolish to tell people not to indulge in this pleasure or that. It is especially foolish to make our instruction to the young a series of don'ts. Here again possession is dispossession. Put in the good and the evil will be kept out. We once saw Mr. Moody hold a glass before an audience and say: "How am I to get the air out of this glass?" No one anwered. He turned, and from a pitcher poured the glass to overflowing with water. "Now," said he, "the air is all out." Let us learn the strategy. Put in the good. Give young people plenty of pleasure, but let it be pure and wholesome pleasure. Give them plenty to do that is good and true, and the evil will be kept out.

We may apply the same thought to our daily occupations and every department of life. Let us remember that our souls are like a picture gallery. If we cover the walls of them with things noble and beautiful and pure the foul and fleshy will only seem revolting. "Hang this upon the wall of your room," said a wise picture dealer to an Oxford under-graduate, as he handed him the engraving of a Madonna of Raphæl, "and then all the pictures of jockeys and ballet girls will disappear." Let us try the same experiment with our souls. Let their walls be hung with all things pure and perfect—the thought of God, the image of Christ, the lives of God's Saints, the inspirations of good and great men, the memories of golden deeds, the noble passage of poetic thought, scenes of mountains and sunset and ocean. If we do this there will be no room for the things that defile and deprave. When a bottle is full of water you cannot pour oil into it. The best way for us to resist a temptation is to leave no room

for it in our hearts. The best way for us to fortify our children against the evil that is in the world is to have their affections occupied with the truth of God and the love of the good.

Communion Continued.

"They constrained Him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent; and He went in to tarry with them." Luke 24: 29.

Like these disciples on their walk to Emmaus, when we have the Savior's company a little while we will not be contented until we have more of it. Some liquors men drink increase thirst. Never is the Christian tired of Christ's company. Love's logic is always ready with a plea. "Abide with us, for it is toward evening."

The suggestion also comes that if we would keep Christ with us we must constrain Him. Christ will not intrude where He is not wanted. We picture those travelers as laying hold upon His arms, and entreating Him to tarry with them. If we open the door, He will come in and sup with us and we with Him. Christ is pleased to have us seek His company and constrain Him to carry with us. Possibly in many of our churches, as with these disciples, we have His presence. The question then becomes one as to how we can keep Him with us.

1. First, *allow no rivals in your heart.* Christ will never tarry in a divided heart. Be sure of that. He must either be all to us or nothing. "Ye cannot serve

God and mammon." Let us be watchful that we love Him with an undivided love and serve Him with unvarying delight.

2. *Retain no darling sin.* Charles Spurgeon once said, "A little evil will spoil our peace, just as a small stone in one's shoe will spoil his walking." Many people lose Christ's presence thro the indulgence of what they call little sins. But it is the "litttle foxes that spoil the vines." The one who makes allowance for little sins will soon be indulging in larger sins. The man who compromises with evil will soon be overcome of evil. Christ will not stay with us if we make allowance for sin.

3. *Make your heart a fit temple for Christ's indwelling.* Out with the money changers, and all unholy traffic. Give no place to the things that defile the body or degrade the soul. Keep the heart clean; the mind pure. Make your heart not a place for harsh and warring sounds, but make it indeed a house of prayer. If it is made fit for Christ's presence He will come and make His residence in the temple of your soul.

4. *Give Him goodly entertainment.* Make it suitable for such a guest. Cleopatra entertained Mark Anthony with a feast beyond price. Pearls were melted in the wine and every lavish expenditure was made to impress him with her welcome. Such is not what Christ asks of us, but that we should receive him joyfully, and perform the duties that will invite his approval.

5. Furthermore, *Do not fail to trust Him while He is with you.* Make Him your confidential friend. Keep no secrets from Him. Confess your faults to Him.

Assert your love to Him, and let Him know that you accept His.

6. Lastly, *Notice some of the special blessings of having Him with us.*

a. Companionship. We cannot feel alone when he is with us. "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." In sickness, in sorrow, in temptation and distress, what a blessing it is to feel that we have at our side a Companion so tried and so helpful.

b. Quickening of our love. Our hearts will burn within us as He talks with us by the way. We will forget our troubles and find our faith strengthened, our love quickened, and our hope cheered by the fact that we have His presence with us.

According to Your Faith.

"According to your faith be it unto you." St. Matt. 9: 9.

Entered upon another year of labor for Christ and His cause, every true minister, officer and member of our churches is wishing to be more consecrated and successful then ever before. As Christian workers we all agree in hoping to see in the weeks and months just before us multitudes of souls won to Christ and His Church.

1. *The hindering power of unbelief.*

If we are disappointed in seeing the blessings we desire, let us know that the reason will be found principally in the sin of unbelief. In each church the measure of our blessings will be according to the measure of our faith. Recall that incident of Christ's visit

to Nazareth. It was His old home, His own neighborhood where He was brought up, and He came laden with blessings for His old friends and associates if they would accept; "but" it is recorded, "he could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." As Christ came to the synagogue that day ready to bless the people so is it when He visits His churches still. And as the measure of the blessing was according to the measure of their faith, so is it still.

In order then to receive fulness of blessing, how important is it that we swing wide open the door of faith. How often we are like those Christians praying for Peter in prison! Bring to mind the scene. The people praying for his release; while they were praying he knocked at the door; but they would not believe it was Peter. He continued knocking. When they opened the door and saw it was indeed he, they were "astonished." Think of it. The Church praying. God answering. And the people astonished! How often it is that Christ, consistently with His own character, really cannot do many mighty works in our churches "because of our unbelief."

2. *The obtaining power of faith.*

Oh, members of Christ's beloved Church, why not open wide the door of faith and ask and undertake and expect great things from the Lord? Let us lay our plans wide and large. He says, "According to your faith be it unto you." It is as if one very rich were to hand us a blank check with his name signed, and say, "Now, fill it out yourself; write in the amount you would draw, and according to your faith in me be it

unto you." We might hesitate to make too large a draft upon an earthly friend, but there is no need to draw lightly upon God. Instead, He is honored and pleased when we make large drafts.

Not long before his death it was our privilege to meet at Clinton Springs, N. Y., that grand old Christian philanthropist, George H. Stuart. Just after the battle of Gettysburg, when medicines were very scarce, Mr. Stuart, then at the head of the Christian Commission, telegraphed to the merchants of Boston, "May I draw on you at sight for ten thousand dollars?" The telegram was posted in the Exchange. Thirty minutes later there flashed back along the wire: "Draw on us for sixty thousand!" Lord, increase our faith. May it not be that as pastors and churches, as Christians and workers, we are far too timid in our asking? May it not be that we are asking and expecting only a little of the quickening of the Spirit? Asking and expecting to see only a few souls saved? Asking and expecting God to honor a small draft only, when the reply comes flashing from His throne: "Not ten thousand, but sixty thousand! Prove me now. Honor me with a large draft. Put me to the proof, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive?" Nothing can hinder the richest blessings we could wish—nothing but unbelief. Unbelief stops prayer, stops expectation, stops work, cuts the very nerve and sinew of effort. But faith removes mountains, surmounts difficulties, overcomes the world, brings sure success. "If thou canst believe; all things are possible to him that believeth."

Warning Against Shipwreck.

"Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck."—Timothy 1:19.

A few years ago it was our privilege to have place on a ship that was being launched, and feel the thrill of excitement as she shot down the stays and plunged into her ocean home. After the momentary excitement of the motion of the ship, the cheering of the multitude, the bestowing upon the vessel of a name, there came the thought of not a little solemnity in considering the many storms the boat would likely have to meet. Nor were these thoughts ill-conceived, for upon the first voyage she was caught in a violent gale and had her bowsprit carried away. We are glad to say that she is floating still and doing good service. Nevertheless, we still consider it a solemn and impressive sight to see any vessel start on its life voyage, for it always brings up the thought as to what she may meet.

If this is true of a vessel how much more so of a Christian starting, or even some distance on, in the voyage of life. Paul plainly speaks of some who, having put away faith and a good conscience, have made spiritual shipwreck—are wrecked for two worlds. Let us pay heed to some warnings to prevent such shipwreck.

I. DON'T LOSE YOUR RECKONING.

Paul mentions at least two ways of doing this.

1. *By putting away faith.* There are many who in their early homes were taught the truth of God and were well instructed in the way of life, but they have

let intellectual pride come in. They are not true to the religion of their fathers. They have gradually put away faith. They are resting now only in some theory of future probation or "eternal hope," are just drifting, or answer all questions with the agnostic's reply, "I don't know." Where are you spiritually? "I don't know." How do you stand related to God and eternity? "I don't know." Then, my dear friend, you have lost your reckoning.

After a voyage of three thousand miles the "Schiller" was wrecked on Bishop's Rock, at the very foot of Bishop's Rock Lighthouse. Captain Thomas thought he was two miles at least off the rocks, but he really did not know where he was. His mistake sent three hundred and forty-two souls unwarmed to eternity.

But ship captains are not the only people who lose their reckoning. Every day you can find people who do not know where they are. Ask them how they stand related to God and Christ and the Bible and heaven. They cannot tell you. They are sailing thoughtlessly—maybe recklessly—almost upon an awful reef of destruction; and yet they go on. Let me entreat you to stop. Stop! Stop stockstill until you find out where you are! You are running in a fog. The law requires you to stop and get your reckoning. It is an awful thing for one to put away faith, lose his reckoning and, drifting, make shipwreck of the soul.

2. *By tampering with conscience.* Indeed, nearly everyone who goes wrong begins in this way.

A few years ago one of our fine Cunarders lost her reckoning and came near being lost. When they discovered the cause they found that a nail had been driv-

en in the pilot-house carelessly near the compass, and had deflected it a little so that it was not trustworthy to steer by. To be sure, the deflection was very slight, but in the width of an ocean voyage it made not a little difference in the direction of the vessel.

Just so it is with conscience; it is liable to be deflected by very little things. This is one reason why we should always act with decision even in the smallest matters of duty—in order to keep conscience true. If you allow it to be deflected even a little you will lose your reckoning, and losing reckoning you are liable to make shipwreck of your soul.

II. AVOID THE ROCKS.

There are many. We will mention only a few.

1. Avoid the rock of *covetousness.* God has put a text as a light-house to warn us off this rock: "Take heed and beware of covetousness."

2. Avoid the rock of *evil company.* Many a fine vessel has been wrecked on this rock. Here is another light-house if we will heed it: "The companion of fools shall be destroyed."

3. Avoid the rock of *irreverence for the Sabbath.* Not a few have run upon that rock and made shipwreck of the soul. Here is the light-house: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

4. Avoid the rock of *spiritual procrastination.* People know their duty; why will they delay in matters of the soul? When the "Loch Earn" and the "Ville du Havre" collided, in just twelve minutes the second named went down with two hundred and twelve souls. How much time had they to prepare? It is better, like one of these passengers, a young Princeton graduate,

Hamilton Murray, to be ready. Many intend to become Christians, but delay. Here is another divinely erected light-house to warn off this rock: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

Keep your reckoning. Keep off the rocks.

Faith Rewarded.

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son thy sins be forgiven thee." Mark 2: 5.

Christ had been at Capernaum before. After he had gone they missed him. Then they began to appreciate who he was, his wisdom, his power, and the wonder of his works. But now "again He entered into Capernaum after some days."

1. We notice, first, that *great multitudes gathered about Christ.* He entered into a house and began to speak, but the place could not contain the people. "There was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door." There was not even standing room. But what was it that so attracted the crowds? It was the fact that Christ was in that house healing the sick. That drew the crowds; and do you not know that the surest way to secure an audience is to have it known that Christ is in a house healing and saving sinners? People gather where Christ is. It is not so much a question of the kind of preaching as it is whether or not Christ is present. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

2. *To this crowd Christ "preached the word," and*

the preaching got the people to do something. They began to think of that paralytic. They said, "There is that poor sick man, he ought to be here that Christ might heal him; let us go and bring him." So do we know that is the best preaching which incites people to work and bring others into the presence of Christ —those who do not know him—that poor, sin palsied man, that unsaved neighbor, those children outside of the Church and Sunday-school, and even dearest friends who need his healing power.

3. The useful work to which the people were incited *was that of trying to save someone.* The purpose of bringing that paralytic to Christ was that he might be healed. They wanted to save that man; and what is needed to-day is such a longing in the hearts of God's people as will lead them to try to save the perishing. Let us get the idea of trying to save some one. Horace Mann, after visiting a reformatory, noting its costly buildings and expensive corps of teachers, said: "If all this results in saving only a boy, it were worth all the expense and labor." A cautious, calculating man who heard the remark, thought him extravagant and said, "Do you not go a little too far when you say that the reformation of one boy would be sufficient compensation for all this immense outlay?" *"Not if it were my boy,"* was the quick reply. Are the dying souls about you nothing to you? Some are your boys. Some are your friends. All are your brother-men.

4. This scriptural incident *suggests that some people will not come to Christ unless they are helped to do so.* This man, sick of the palsy, would probably never have found Christ had he not received the assistance

of his friends. Mr. Moody says he doubts if anyone was ever saved without the co-operation of human agents. Carry your friends to Christ. Mothers, fathers, friends, the Savior is come within reach. Take up those whom you love and carry them to Him.

5. *Christ especially commended the faith of the friends.* "When Jesus saw their faith." The four friends of the paralytic took him up and carried him to Christ. We cannot accept Christ for a friend, but we can carry our friend to Christ. It is when he sees our faith that he gives the answer.

6. *In saving souls do not let ceremony or departure from accustomed ways of doing things deter you.* A door is the most proper way by which to enter a house. To enter thro a window would not seem becoming; but certainly to go down thro the roof is contrary to all our ideas of decorum. But the only idea of these men was to get the sick man to Christ. They did not hesitate in regard to methods. We are in danger of being too much afraid of departing from accustomed ways of doing religious work. The "anxious seat," the "mourner's bench," the "rising for prayer," may not seem proper, but they have been abundantly blessed of God.

7. *Do not despair of the conversion of even the most hardened sinner.* Palsy was regarded an incurable disease. Some would say that this was an absolutely hopeless case; but there are no hopeless cases from the standpoint of Christ. Let us believe; let us have faith in him; let us do the work that falls to us faithfully, and know that Christ will exercise his power in healing even the most hardened. Faith will always be rewarded. Christ always honors it.

Christian Unselfishness.

"For even Christ pleased not himself." Romans 15: 3.

When a man becomes a microcosm—a little world of his own—he might just as well be dead matter. How great is the tendency to become self-centered. But among the followers of Christ the only way to be great is by becoming great servants. We do best when we do most for others' good.

To this end let us learn Christian unselfishness.

I. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRISTIAN UNSELFISHNESS.

"For even Christ pleased not himself." The ideal of Christian attainment is to be like Christ. The test and proof of discipleship is to be led by the Spirit of Christ. (Rom. 8: 14).

1. Christ did not think of his *personal comfort.* (Matt. 8: 20). We too often do.

2. Christ did not seek personal *honor.* (Phil. 2: 7). We do.

3. Christ did not strive for *advantage* over others. (Matt. 10: 43). We do.

II. THE IMPELLING MOTIVE TO THIS LIFE OF SELF-FORGIVENESS WAS LOVE. John 15: 13.

It is characteristic of love that it seeks not its own, but others' good. Note some particulars in which we may show this Christlike unselfishness of love:

1. The unselfishness of love may be shown in *Christlike sympathy with the sorrowing.* (Luke 7: 13).

2. The unselfishness of love is manifest in readiness to *bear the burdens of the weak.* (Gal. 6: 2).

3. The unselfishness of love is seen especially in *efforts to save the souls of the perishing.* (Rom. 1: 14). "I am debtor."

4. The unselfishness of love may be displayed in a *readiness to give up many so-called rights for the good of others.* 1 Cor. 8: 13). "If meat offend. . . I will eat no meat."

5. The unselfishness of love *leads us to do work that is hard and disagreeable for others' sake.* (Acts 20: 21-24).

III. SOME OF THE REWARDS OF CHRISTIAN UNSELFISHNESS.

1. *Happiness.* In acts of Christian unselfishness is the way to forget all our own trials and heartaches. It is also the way to positive joy.

2. *Friends.* It is the way to have friends and be valued in life. (Prov. 18: 24).

3. *Remembrance.* It is the way to build our best monument—in the hearts of others. 2 Chron. 32: 33).

4. *God's approval.* In acts of Christian unselfishness is the way to the "come, ye blessed." "Inasmuch as to the least of these, to me." (Matt. 25: 40).

Are we Christ's? Then we must show it by acting under this law and after this example of Christ. Selish people are ever seeking and never finding happiness; unselfish people are finding happiness ever without seeking. It is to be obtained indirectly. Try giving away in order to become rich. Try Christian unselfishness as the road both to happiness and to Heaven.

Conversion; Its Means and Its Tests.

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" etc.—Acts 16:30-34.

I. Its necessity.

Think for a moment of some inevitable thing. For example: If I go overland to California, I must scale the Rocky Mountains. If I ever get sight of Europe I must cross the Atlantic. If I am ever to see the light I must have eyes. So there are some "musts" in religion; Christ used the word "must" frequently. He applied it to this thought of the necessity of conversion; "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, ye must be born again." There are people, who do not like that doctrine. We know a woman who left an orthodox church and joined the Universalists saying that her reason for doing so was to get rid of hearing about conversion. But Christ made it as plain as any teaching. He taught regeneration or conversion is necessary if we are to enter the Kingdom of God. The method is mysterious. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." We can understand how necessary the new birth is when we consider our sinful state by nature. We are "dead in trespasses and in sin" We are not simply sick and able, with a little effort, to cure ourselves. We are not entirely well and able to save ourselves; but we are dead and can only live by Divine grace placing within us and fanning to a flame the spark of life.

II. What this change is.

It must be considered from two sides—the Divine and the human.

1. From the Divine side it is called *regeneration.* It is the result of an act by a power outside of ourselves. It is due to God's choice of us. It is due to God's bringing his truth to bear upon us. It is due to God's working by his Spirit within us. It is a new birth, a regeneration—beginning to live over again.

2. From the human side it is spoken of as *conversion.* Conversion is simply turning about. It is walking along the road in one direction, then turning and walking in the opposite direction. It is changing from the life of evil to the life of good. It is changing from the doing evil to doing good. In the evening the Philippian Jailer was most cruelly treating Paul and Silas. Before morning he was washing their stripes and showing them every attention. That was a conversion —a turning about. Conversion is man's surrender to God. It is "right about face." It is, of course, usually the direct result of regeneration.

III. THE MEANS OF CONVERSION.

1. In this case we have first the *praying and singing of the apostles.* The prisoners were listening. Conversion usually comes about in the same way still. It is as some sound is heard; such as the praying of a body of God's people or their singing, or as some one preaches or teaches the Word that the Spirit applies the truth to those who hear.

2. There was secondly, the *shock of the earthquake.* So is it still. The soul is arrested by some sudden circumstances—loss of property, severe disappointment, a death in the family, or something that brings a

shock. It is when our attention is riveted that the Spirit takes hold of us and conversion results.

3. *Faith.*

Faith is the assent of the intellect and the consent of the will. It is the yielding to Christ as Lord.

IV. Tests of Conversion.

1. *Rejoicingly hearing God's word.* A man who has turned to the Lord will want to hear all he can about him. This was one indication of the jailer's conversion. He invited the apostles to speak to him freely in regard to the way to live.

2. *An immediate change of life.*

This was noticeable in the jailer, for he was transformed at once a cruel jailer to a merciful nurse. "He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes."

3. *Immediate confession to Christ.*

"And was baptised." He did not delay to make it known that he hoped for salvation thro Christ. He did not wish to be a disciple secretly. One of the best indications of conversion is that a man should desire to make an open confession of faith in Christ, of love for him and a purpose to strive to serve him.

4. *Helpfulness.*

"And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them." When people begin to feed others it is a good sign. When they begin to be helpful to those about them and promote the cause of Christ you may be pretty sure that they have experienced the converting grace of Christ.

5. *Joy in new life.*

It says that the jailer "rejoiced." Christian joy is a good sign of possessing a Christian heart.

6. *The man's home was changed.* The change reached the conduct of his household. A blessing came to others besides himself that day. This is the way sound conversion affects the lives of men. We may test our ground for hope by this incident of the Philippian jailer.

Christians as Epistles.

Epistles .. known and read of all men .. written not with ink, etc. 2 Cor. 3: 2, 3.

The lives of true Christians at Corinth served as letters to recommend both Paul the servant and Christ the Lord. Men read men. Living epistles are read when Bible epistles are not.

Five things about these letters are mentioned:

a. The tablet on which the writing is made—"Fleshy tables of the heart."

b. The writing. Not Christianity printed in creeds, but the "mind of Christ" legible in lives.

c. The writer. "The Spirit of the living God." Without him we can do nothing.

d. The pen. God uses human instruments. He used Paul. He uses us.

e. The readers. They are many. They read with varying motives; some to comment on us favorably, many to do so unfavorably.

I. OBSERVE, FIRST, THAT EVERY ONE'S LIFE IS AN OPEN LETTER.

1. Addressed to the world and challenging inspection. (Matt. 5: 14).

2. The challenge is accepted and men read and judge us. (Acts 4: 13).

II. NOTICE, ALSO, OUR LIFE-LETTER SHOULD BE CLEARLY WRITTEN, SO, EASILY READ. (Matt. 3: 18).

1. Therefore be not secret Christians, but confess Christ openly. (Mark 3: 38).

2. Then show forth a plain and legible life. How many life-epistles are so scribbled we can hardly make them out. (Isa. 43: 10).

3. Consider yourself employed of God to reveal Christ. (Acts 1: 8).

III. BEAR IN MIND, ALSO, HOW MANY, MANY ARE THE READERS. "KNOWN AND READ OF ALL MEN."

Christian lives are about the only religious books the world reads. Outsiders form their impressions of Christianity, not as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures, but as it is revealed in us. They do not study God's word, but they do study church members. Let us be careful to reveal only "the truth as it is in Jesus."

IV. LASTLY, REMEMBER THAT, LIKE ALL READING, WHAT MEN READ IN THIS WAY HAS GREAT INFLUENCE UPON THEM. Acts 5: 15.

1. This gives us great opportunity for good. For we may lead men to Christ.

2. It also carries great possibilities of evil. For we may drive men from Christ.

Christian, be a reflector of Christ. If ever such living was needed it is now. And pure lives are possible—as possible as the pearl in the sea, but not salty; as the fair lily in the foul pond, or as a firefly passing thro the flame unscorched. In the world, but not of it, let us be living epistles, known and read of all men.

Inexcusable Idleness.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?"—Matt. 20: 6.

There is reproof in this question. The answer given by the men, "Because no man has hired us," did not seem to be a complete vindication. In any case as we apply the question to workers in Christ's vineyard to-day it certainly suggests the thought of inexcusable idleness. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

I. WHY? THE VINEYARD IS SO SPACIOUS!

The fields are so wide and large. There is so much to be done. Lifting up our eyes we see the wide fields—fields in India, fields in Africa, fields in the islands of the sea. Yes, and there are even wide unharvested fields in our own land, and in communities where we live. "Go—work—to-day—in my vineyard." "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

II. WHY? THE MASTER IS SO KIND!

He is not a hard task-master, driving and forcing His laborers beyond their power. He is a good master to work for, because,

1. *He does not expect impossibilities of us.*

2. *He sympathizes with our difficulties.*

3. *He makes good provision for us.* He feeds us with the best of food. He guards us from enemies while we work. There is in the vineyard a tower with watchmen upon its walls, and so we are protected in our labors. No master could be more kind than He is. No master could be more considerate for those who are under him. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

III. WHY? THE TIME FOR WORKING IS SO SHORT!

1. *The Master will accept your efforts begun even at*

the eleventh hour. Whether the whole day is before us or only a part of it, the time for earthly labor is short and we ought to be up and doing while it is called to-day.

2. *The need of haste.* "The night cometh." Knowing the shortness of the time should lead us to labor all the more diligently. The needlewoman working by her bit of candle hastens to finish the work before the light burns down to its socket. So is the time for working short with us all. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work nor knowledge, nor device in the grave whither thou goest." There is no finishing up life's undone work when this life is over.

3. Even if the work should seem irksome there is still comfort in the thought that the time is not long. Why then be idle? "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

IV. WHY? THE REWARD IS SO LIBERAL!

"What is right I will give thee." This master we work for will give the fullest possible return.

1. There is a reward in the very *act of doing the work.* The mere sense of being usefully occupied brings no little reward to the worker.

2. There is a reward in the *result of the work.* It is no small part of the reward of a Christian worker that he is permitted to see souls saved. It is a delight something like that of a seaman who, escaping from a wreck has the joy of seeing another man at his side he has been enabled to rescue. The mere fact of seeing the harvest of souls brings rich reward to the worker.

3. There is reward in the way of *active payment* when the evening comes. "So when the even was come

the Lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire." He always calls us at the close of the day and gives us even more than the full reward. He does not delay. He does not reduce the payment. He gives more than we have any right to expect. "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." With such a master and such payment and so much work to be done, surely the question may well be asked of many of us, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

The Rescue of Souls.

"And of some have compassion, making a difference, and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Jude 22: 23.

This is a wonderful text. Its exact translation is a little difficult, yet its general meaning is very plain. First, it represents a common danger—the loss of the soul. Secondly, it represents a common duty—that of the rescuing of souls—"pulling them out of the fire." Lastly, it represents the two strongest appealing motives the Gospel presents to control our acts, love and fear.

I. THE COMMON DANGER.

It is indicated by our need of being saved. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Had the world not needed saving Christ need never have come. Some people do not like the Bible warnings, yet they are just as much love-filled as are the gentlest wooings. If men are in a burning house asleep it is no unkindness to arouse

them. The real unkindness will be to let them sleep. If there is nothing on the track, why wave the red signal? Why have lighthouses if there are no rocks? God's message is most loving, because it tells both the danger and the way of escape. Our Master was infinitely kind and loving and tender, and yet He did not shun to tell men the exact truth in regard to their condition. And in our Christian work to-day we need to learn that if we really long to save men we must tell them some disagreeable truths. "The wages of sin is death." "All have sinned and come short." But, glad fact, with these truths we may also connect other truths: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life thro Jesus Christ, our Lord." This suggests:

II. A COMMON DUTY.

It is that of saving men. Some we may save with compassionate and gentle entreaty; others need startling announcement and warning. But in whichever way may be necessary the great duty is to save them—"pulling them out of the fire." The work of Christians is rescue work. The world sings the praises of Grace Darling for her noble rescue of men from the wreck. We may all be, and should all be, Grace Darlings in the spiritual life. It is not enough that we are saved, but we must, in turn, set about the saving of others. Not the Christian clinging with both hands to the cross of refuge, but clinging with one hand, and with the other lifting some one else from the dark waves of sin, is the true picture of the Christian life. Look up and lift up! We consider it inhuman to neglect the saving of lives. It is far more inhuman to

neglect the saving of souls. The men in the railway wreck who were rescued all turned rescuers. When the vessel went down the sailors in the life-boat picked up all they could find. A common duty confronts us as Christians. It is to do all in our pewer to rescue the lost. Let us not neglect or delay.

III. THE APPEALING MOTIVES.

1. The first of these is *love.* In a loving way we are to tell men of the love of Christ. Love is the motive from which we act, and it is, as well, the motive to which we appeal. Let us try to present to men that love of Christ "which passeth knowledge." It is broad enough to reach the width of the world. It is deep enough to reach down to the most degraded. It is long enough to last thro all time, and high enough to lift us up to Heaven. Surely it must be a hard heart we cannot reach with that appeal,—the love of Christ. When we really make plain to people the fact that God loves them we will find them crowding into the kingdom.

2. But *fear* is a motive also. Our fear that men will be lost moves us. And men that are hardened in sin sometimes respond only to the motive of fear. It may require a rude awakening when a man is in deep sleep and his house afire. It may require a sharp cry when the stumbling man is upon the very brink of the precipice. If gentle pleas will not move men, they must be saved with fear. Tell of the certainty of death, the permanency of character, the certainty of judgment. Appeal to fear. Warnings are as loving as wooings are. Let us use well-adapted means,—every means in order that souls may be saved.

Cure for Backsliders.

"Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you.'—Jer.3:12.

Riding along with a Christian friend, not long since, he confided to us the fact that he was not happy. He himself knew the reason, and frankly confessed it. He explained that formerly he had kept up regular habits of prayer and Bible study, that he had been a regular attendant at the weekly prayer-meetings of the church and enjoyed them, that he was always in his place on the Sabbath, but that by and by, gradually he began to neglect these things, and consequently had grown more and more cold and lifeless spiritually, increasingly cheerless and hopeless until now he was downright and thoroly unhappy.

How many of us, if the truth were known, would be found in the same condition?

1. *A backslidden condition is always an unhappy condition.* There is a homesickness of soul more or less felt by every backslidden Christian. Oftentimes the unhappiness is so plain as to be noticeable to others. There is a loss of hopefulness and good cheer, a certain undefined weary and wistful look which seems to say:

> "Where is the blessedness I knew
> When first I found the Lord?"

The truth is that the soul is sick—homesick. Like a bird caged away from its native forest, it yearns for that life for which it was meant by the Creator. There is such a thing as being a little too religious to enjoy sin and yet too sinful to enjoy religion. A backslidden Chistian usually keeps up the forms of religious ser-

vices; but he has no heart or pleasure in them. He has the duties of religion without its delights. The backslidden state is an unhappy state. It is a state like that of a wanderer away from home. It is with each as with the prodigal in the far country.

2. *The backslidden condition is one which presents an immediate duty.* There is but one cure for this condition of spiritual ill health. There is a cure, and it is a very plain and simple one, and very sure. Let an illustration point it out, for it is much like that method in science known as the curing of sick pearls. What, do pearls get sick? Yes, it seems that these beautiful gems pine and lose their color at times, and can be restored to health only by a prolonged visit to their ocean home. At the foot of a cliff under the windows of the castle of Mirimar, formerly the residence of the Mexican Emperor Maximillian, at the depth of eighty feet below the surface of the Adriatic, is a kind of sage fashioned by divers in the face of the rock. In that cage are some of the most magnificent pearls in existence. They belong to the Achduchess Rainer. Having been left unworn for a long time, the gems lost their color and became "sick." The experts were unanimous in declaring that the only means by which they could be restored to their original brilliancy was by submitting them to a prolonged immersion in the depths of the sea. They have been lying there for a number of years, and are gradually but surely regaining their former unrivalled oriecy.

Back into the communion with God; back to our Bibles; back to the "Christian's native air" of prayer; back to "first principles," and "first love," and "first works"

back to renewed immersion in these, and only so, can we as backslidden Christians, like the pearl, regain our former beauty and radiancy and usefulness in the world.

"Return! Return!" If we are conscious of having backslidden even the least, let us delay not to make instant return to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and to renewed engagement in duty.

The Advantages of Seeking the Lord.

"They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."—Ps. 34:10.

This Psalm has been called "The Good Man's Song of Triumph." Recognizing that God knows best what is really "good" for us, here is assurance that those who "seek the Lord,"

1. *Shall not want any good thing connected with their salvation and acceptance with God.*

They have assurance of pardon, adoption as children, justification, comfort, and help from the Holy Spirit.

2. *Shall not want any good thing necessary for their enjoyment, protection or care.*

They will be provided with needed blessings—defended—delivered—guarded—kept.

3. *Shall not want any good thing to comfort them in darkness and trouble.* Will be given God's presence —word—love—sympathy—help.

4. *They shall not want any good thing to support in death or secure their safe arrival in heaven.* (See Psalm 23.)

There is the greatest possible present and eternal advantage in seeking and serving the Lord.

Faithfulness.

"Moreover it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful."—I Cor. 4:12.

1. *Faithfulness implies, first, a firm adherence to the person of Christ.* It means loyalty. It is required of us as Christian stewards that we be found faithful and loyal to our Master. The whole world joins in execrating a deserter. He is hated by enemy and friend alike. No one has any respect for the Benedict Arnolds and Aaron Burrs. Their names are hated not only in America, but in every civilized land. What is wanted is fidelity to Christ. Like the Roman soldier taking the oath of allegiance, so we bind ourselves to fight with and for Him even unto death.

2. *This fidelity implies, again, a careful and exact performance of the duties He assigns us.*

It is required in a steward that he be found faithful; that means reliable in his work. That is a prime quality in all business or profesional success. Business houses want clerks who are reliable. Manufacturers want men who are reliable. The call everywhere is for men of fidelity and reliability.

In a terrible gale of 1851 the beautiful lighthouse on Minot's Ledge, near Boston, was destroyed. Two men were in it at the time. A great multitude gathered on the shore waiting in anxious distress to witness its expected fall. But every hour the bell tolled the time, and constantly the light shone out into the darkness to warn the sailor from the dangerous spot. No wind could silence the bell; no wave extinguish the light. But at last one wave, one giant wave, mightier than

all the rest, rose up and threw its arms around the tower and laid it low in the sea. Then alone was the bell silent. Then alone did the light cease to shine. Just such faithfulness to duty as was shown by those lighthouse keepers is the fidelity we should show to the duties Christ assigns us.

3. *This fidelity implies, again, firm adhesion to the party of Christ.*

There are but two parties, one for, one against. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Be loyal to the people of Christ, the Church of Christ, the cause of Christ.

4. *This fidelity implies also faithful continuance in well-doing.*

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." There is nothing in the history of Pompeii that invests it with a deeper interest than the spot where a soldier of Rome displayed a most heroic fidelity. That fatal day on which Vesuvius, at whose feet the city stood, burst out into an eruption that shook the earth, a sentinel kept watch by the gate which looked on the burning mountain. Amidst the fearful disorder the sentinel had been forgotten; and as Rome required her sentinels, happen what might, to hold their posts until relieved by the guard or set at liberty by other officers, he had to choose between death and honor. Pattern of fidelity, he stands by his post! Slowly but surely the ashes rise on his manly form; now they reach his breast, and now covering his lips they choke his breathing. He also "was faithful unto death." After seventeen centuries they have found his skeleton standing erect in a marble niche clad in its

rusty armor, the helmet on his empty skull, and his bony fingers still closing upon his spear. Be thou, fellow Christians, likewise faithful unto death, and yours shall be a crown of eternal life and glory.

Love for Our Unseen Saviour.

"Whom having not seen ye love." 1 Peter 1: 8.

The Christian life springs out of a personal faith in and love for the unseen Christ. The apostle who wrote this sentence describes a state of mind and heart existing among the scattered Christians throughout Asia Minor. Altho he had himself seen the Savior of whom he spoke, he affirms indirectly that sight of Jesus was not necessary either to faith or love. They had never seen Him, and yet they loved Him and rejoiced in Him with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." He undoubtedly had in mind our Lord's saying to Thomas, which he also heard: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed." These scattered Christians were in the line of that blessing pronounced upon them beforehand by the risen Lord.

I. The nature of this love.

1. It is, as we have said, a personal attachment to our unseen Lord. It is not the accepting of Christianity as a system. It is not enough that we believe the record concerning Christ. It is not enough that we are members of His Church. The real question is, How do we stand related to Christ? Do we love Him? Is he dear to us? Does He become Husband, Brother,

Friend? We ought to be able to say, "We love Him because he first loved us." We ought to be able to join with Paul, who exclaimed, "Who loved me and gave himself for me."

2. "But," says some one, "can we love an unseen Christ?" There are some who think such love impossible. They say it is unreasonable to expect to love a person we have never seen. But this is a mistake. Even among friends such love exists. We know of a Brooklyn lady who has for years been in correspondence with a young Japanese girl, and both, tho separated by thousands of miles, and tho they never saw each other, and never expect to see each other in this world, have, thro their letters, become acquainted, and formed a very warm attachment for each other. This has come about entirely by correspondence. No one would be impressed by the natural, spontaneous and unstudied expression of this attachment on the part of the Japanase girl; showing unmistakably that her letters come from her heart and that she has a sincere and deep affection for her unseen friend in this country. Here we have a beautiful example of affection toward an unseen human friend. If we can believe in the existence of an earthly friend and that friend is worthy of tender and grateful affection, as we certainly can, where is the difficulty in believing in the existence of our heavenly Friend, who is Christ the Lord, who once bore our sins in His own body on the tree and loves us with an everlasting love?

We know of an officer in one of our churches who corresponded with a young colored girl in a Southern school, and became as interested in her and as warm-

ly attached as he doubtless would have been had he met her face to face. The love of the blind is a strong love, tho all their friends are unseen. It is an added delight to think of our religion as a personal love for the unseen Savior.

II. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNS OF THIS LOVE?

1. One of the earliest is a *deed of solemn dedication.* First, somewhere in private, in the presence of God alone, these vows are made. It is something personal and private which has to do only with God and one's self. But very soon there follows a public dedication. The order is first to accept God and then to avow God. Joseph of Arimathea was not long "a disciple secretly." Like with him, so with us; soon a time of testing will come, and when the time comes we must openly confess Christ as our Lord.

2. Another sign is *carefulness not to offend or grieve him.* This same is a sign of a earthly love. We have reason to question our love for a friend if we are not watchful lest we wound him. We may well question our love for Christ if we carelessly grieve Him.

3. A further sign is a *glad and willing obedience to His commandments.* If we love we will gladly obey. His commandments will not seem hard to keep.

4. Another sign is a *readiness to defend Him against His foes.* Loyalty leads us to stand up for a human friend when he is unkindly assailed. Loyalty to Christ will make us strong in defence of Him and His honor.

5. Still another sign is a *constant desire to promote His cause.* We may test ourselves by these, tho there are many other ways of showing love

The Wisest Work in the World.

"He that winneth souls is wise."—Prov. 11:30.

Some one inquired of Dr. Lyman Beecher in his old age, "Doctor, you know many things, but what do you think the main thing." The sturdy old hero of forty revivals answered, "It is not theology; it is not controversy; it is saving souls."

Truer words were never uttered. They are good words for us to listen to in these days; and still more especially at this opportune season of the year. For where is the true-hearted Christian who will deny that Dr. Beecher was right, and that saving souls is indeed the wisest work in the world.

1. *On God's own authority we can say that "He that winneth souls is wise."*

It is a wise thing to do and wise men do it. Whatever our occupation in life, whether merchant or mechanic, physician or farmer, we have but one business in the world, that which was Paul's, that which was Christ's, the business of saving men. True, Paul, had his trade and worked at it; but it did not fill his heart and head and hands. When he said, "This one thing I do," the business he referred to was not tent-making but soul-saving. While the first was important, the second was the "main thing."

So we are taught in God's word that it is the mission of every one who knows and loves the Savior to win others to His service. "Go work;" "Go preach;" "Go teach;" "Let him that heareth say, Come." These are the watchwords. Have you heard? Then say "Come." There is no disciple of Christ, no matter how

feeble, no matter how lowly, no matter how young, who ought not distinctly to propose it to himself as an aim never to be lost sight of, that he will lead other souls to the foot of the Cross.

2. *The work we are to do is rescue work.*

It is not enough for any Christian simply that he is saved; he must, in turn, be striving also to save others. Mr. Moody tells us of one day seeing a steel engraving which pleased him very much. He says, "I thought it was the finest thing I had ever seen, at the time, and I bought it." It was the picture of a woman coming out of the water and clinging with both hands to the Cross of Refuge. "But afterwards," he goes on to say, "I saw another picture that spoiled this one for me entirely—it was so much more lovely. It was a picture of a person coming out of the dark waters with one arm clinging to the Cross, but with the other she was lifting some one else out of the waves."

Yes, "saved" is good, but we will all agree that "saved and saving" is a far better and nobler picture of true Christian life. Saved and saving! Keeping a firm hold upon the Cross ourselves, but striving ever to lift our souls from the dark billows of sin that beat on the dangerous coast of eternity. Poor, week and feeble men and women that we are, God will use us if we are willing. He has sent no angels to make known and offer His Gospel. So far as we can see, it is God's plan to save the world thro man's efforts for men. To be sure we cannot convert men but teling them the Gospel and persuading them to accept it is our work; conversation is God's work; but if we do our part God will do His.

3. *The opportunities are many.*

What our churches need is that life-saving, vitalizing fire of God's Holy Spirit which will arouse every individual Christian to earnest, consecrated personal work. "Every Church a Band of Missionaries," is the title of a tract. We have not read the tract, but the title is very suggestive. A good deal has been said of late about the importance of having able ministers in our pulpits, and no doubt it is important. But would it not be well to call the attention of the members of our churches to the fact that it is even more important that they should be able workers, than that they should have able pastors; especially such as fill the popular idea of men unusually gifted as public speakers and sermonizers? Only as our churches become bands of "able workers," in fact, only as the rank and file of our Christian membership become enlisted in active service for Christ, will His Kingdom advance as it ought. "Give me," exclaimed Wesley, "one hundred men who fear nothing but God, hate nothing but sin, and are determined to know nothing among men but Christ and Him crucified, and I will set the world on fire." This at least we know, that, in the existing churches of to-day, if every hundred members were a hundred such workers, burning with the fire of a zeal kindled by Christ's love, we might exclaim, "The Kingdom of God is at hand." Let us be up and doing. It is God's most urgent command, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." God will use us. Men are the messengers. Reward is sure, present and eternal. "He that winneth souls is wise." Wise! It is the greatest, grandest, wisest work in the world; for "they that be wise shall shine as the

brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

God is Love.

God is love. John 4: 16.

Sweet and precious fact is it that God is love. "God is love, and God loves me"—this is enough to make any soul shout aloud for joy.

1. Notice, that this love of His is *a communicating love.* His love is not a dumb or silent thing. Love seeks expression; so is it with God's love. It is a speaking love. He expresses himself to us in his works. "The heavens declare his glory and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." He expresses himself to us by the inner workings of conscience and of his Spirit. But he expresses himself especially thro his Word, which is a letter—a series of leters, of love to us. None of us can overestimate the importance of the fact that our God is not a silent God.

2. His is *a guiding and wisely controlling love.* We are astray, but he does not leave us to wander. We come to the "parting of the ways" and know not which road to take, and he directs us. We lack wisdom and he teaches us. We cannot make plans for ourselves and he makes plans for us. We cannot understand the changing scenes and intricacies of life, but he does understand and "makes all things work together for

our good." He is our all-skilled Pilot. Let us not meddle with the chart or compass, but do our duty in our places, and let Him guide. He knows every rock that endangers, every, every reef that rises in the way. He knows the channel of safety, too, and by and by, if we let him have his way with us, will bring us into our desired haven.

3. He is *a help rendering love.* We are weak. Alone we are sure to fail. But de does not let us fail. He puts grace into our hearts and strength into our souls. Temptation comes and he fortifies us against it. Trials come and he makes his grace sufficient for us. Testing times come and he says, "Fear not; I will help thee; yea, I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

4. His love is *an unchanging love.* It is related that a certain man placed on one of his buildings a weather-vane, upon which were inscribed the words, "God is love." Some one criticized him, saying, "You have placed an immutable truth on a very changeful thing." "No, it is all right," he replied, "it means that God is love whichever way the wind blows." Yes, it is a glad fact that his is a love that can be depended on in every condition of circumstances of life.

What blessed results would grow out of the fact if everywhere, the world over, we could get men to realize that God is love. It would soften the hearts of all the sinning. It would cause to yield all who are resisting. It would cheer the lonely, comfort the sorrowing and fill us with joy and peace in believing. Let us try to get into our own minds and the minds of others a definite conception of this supreme fact, that God is love.

Does Godliness Pay?

"Godliness is profitable, etc." 1 Tim. 4: 8.

Religion is an appeal to common sense. It comes to us and asks our acceptance of it on the grounds of enlightened self interest. It asks it on other grounds and higher grounds, but it asks it on this ground, too. Will it pay? Christ endorsed that way of looking at it when He said: "What shall it profit a man," etc? In one sense, religion is business. It asks us to get our account books, to study the prices current, to question on the probabilities of profit and loss and decide whether it will pay us to purchase "the pearl of great price." It asks us to use the same shrewdness we would in temporal investments. Does it pay to invest in religion?

I. First let us consider this question FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS. Is the text true? Is godliness profitable for the present?

1. How is it in this life about sin? Does sin pay? Five years ago a young man paid ten cents for a cup of strong drink. It seemed pleasant. He only spent a few cents for a whole night's enjoyment. That seemed cheap and profitable. Was it? Look at him now, a poor, wretched, ragged outcast. His sins have cost him health, happiness, character, love, a father's tears, a mother's broken heart, and all hope for the future. Did it pay? "The way of the transgressor is hard." It is always so, and in regard to all kinds of sin. If there is any one thing in all God's universe that does not pay and never can be made to pay it is sin.

2. But how is it for this life about godliness. Does

it pay? Indeed, does anything pay so well?

a. It pays from a business standpoint. Godliness makes a man honest, and it is even a maxim of worldly success that "honesty is the best policy." Godliness makes a man industrious and earnest. And these are two of the highest qualities for temporal advancement. Godliness makes a man firm and decided. It gives him qualities that enable him to say yes when he ought to say yes, and stick to it, and say no when he ought to say no, and mean it. Simply from the standpoint of wordly success godliness pays. As a rule Christian homes are more comfortable than those that are not Christian; children are better fed, better trained, and love surrounded. "I have been young and now am old, yet have not I seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

b. It pays in peace of mind. "My peace give I unto you."

c. It pays in positive joy. "That your joy may be full." Ask any Christian which part of his life contained more joy, before he became a Christian or after.

d. It pays in hope. What is life without hope? It is like sailing without any harbor in view. It is drifting, and drifting is the most unhappy kind of life.

II. Secondly, let us consider the question FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE LIFE THAT IS TO COME.

1. How is it in the life that is to come with those who follow sin? Suppose there were no punishment for sin except its own punishment in the law of the solidification of character; were that not punishment, indeed? But we are taught to believe that there is other punishment for sin. There is the gnawing of remorse.

There is the conscious degradation of finding ourselves fitted only for association with evil. There is the sense of God's displeasure. These are enough let alone the possibility of direct inflictions of justice on account of the violations of divine law.

2. How is it about the life that is to come for the godly? Consider only the meaning of these three words, God, Heaven, Eternity.

Some Soldier Qualities for Christians.

"Fight the good fight of faith." 1 Tim. 6: 12.

Religion is an appeal to the hero qualities in a man or woman. The Christian life is not a thing to be entered into lightly or with the thought of ease. We shall not be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. No, we must fight if we would reign.

But it is a "good fight;" that is, it is a fight in a good cause and worthy of our effort. It is a happy thing also that it is so much easier to fight when we know that the cause is a good one.

What are some of the special qualities a soldier must possess in order to fight well? Let us think of some of them, that we may be led to exercise them.

I. The first we mention is SELF-DENIAL.

1. On one side, self denial means simply the giving up of self, as does a soldier when he enlists. The Christian gives up himself. With this he also gives up selfishness and self-indulgence and sin. The athlete denies himself harmful luxuries that he may be strong.

2. But self-denial has a positive side. It thinks of

the god of others. It is not easy for the soldier to enlist and leave behind home and friends and personal interests. But he gives them up for the good of his country. The missionary going to China must practice much self-denial in these directions. But he is thinking of the salvation of souls. There is plenty of room in the Christian life to display this soldier virtue of self-denial. It is a quality we all need in order to fight the good fight of faith.

II. A second quality which the good soldier must possess is COURAGE.

The Christian life is a moral conflict which calls for courage of the highest type. For a young man to throw up a lucrative position rather than connive at dishonesty, or engage in a wrong transaction, is not an easy thing to do. For a young woman to keep always to high ideals and scorn to do anything that will compromise her Christian character requires courage. Some of these things take as much courage as it did for Knox to defy kings or for Luther to face the anathemas of Rome.

III. A third necessary quality a good soldier must possess is THE SPIRIT AND HABIT OF OBEDIENCE.

The Christian soldier's true attitude toward the Captain of his salvation is this: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;" or this, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" or this, "Here am I, send me." It is the attitude of quick, instant, unquestioning, affectionate obedience.

And such obedience is born only of personal devotion. This is, indeed, the heart of the whole matter. The measure of our self-denial, courage and obedience

will depend upon the measure of our devotion to the Captain of our Salvation. No wonder that men who earned the love and personal loyalty of their soldiers, like Howard, and Nelson, and Havelock, and Phil Sheridan, and Grant, won so many batles. How infiinitely worthy is our Leader! How sincerely should we love Him! How devotedly should we follow Him! How valiantly and bravely should we battle in His cause! "Fight the good fight of faith!"

Work as a Means of Grace.

"And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought, for by occupation they were tent-makers." Acts. 18:3.

Among the Jews in early times, it was customary to teach all their children the full details of some useful calling. It is recorded as a saying of one of the wisest of the rabbis that "he who would not bring his son to a trade was as if he forced him to be a thief." Christ's disciples were workingmen. Christ himself was a carpenter. Here we see that Paul was a tent-maker. Work is honorable. It may also be very wholesome, and usually is.

I. SOME FACTS IN REGARD TO PAUL'S CONDUCT AS A WORKER.

1. *Paul chose a decent and reputable calling.* No one can doubt that tent-making was above reproach as a business. Some occupations in which men engage today are neither decent or honorable—saloon-keeping, the blood-sucking of the money "brokers" who take

mortgages on the household goods of the poor, those who rent shaky, unwholesome tenements, etc.

2. *Paul sought consistent companionship in his business.* Aquila and Priscilla were intelligent, high-minded and companionable to this man of God.

Bad companions, ill-natured partnerships, have wrecked many a business. People of honesty and similar religious tastes naturally drift together. They may be mutually helpful, as were these tent-makers in Corinth. Doubtless they were agreed on making good tents, in closing their store on the Sabbath, etc. We know that Paul did no Sabath work, for we are told that "he reasoned in the synagog every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

3. *Paul found opportunities to do good* when hardest at work. Probably he was the means of the conversion of Aquila and Priscilla, and we know that they became so spiritually intelligent that afterwards he sent the young and eloquent Apollos to them to be "instructed more perfectly in these things," before he was to start out to preach. They conducted the first New Testament theological seminary.

II. SOME ADVANTAGES GROWING OUT OF THE FACT OF PAUL'S LABORING WITH HIS HANDS.

1. *It put him alongside the people and in sympathy with them.* There are "way-up" workers for Christ who can do little on account of the lack of placing themselves near those they would help.

2. This contact with the people *enabled Paul to appreciate their needs and how to meet them.* This principle lies back of all the College Settlements and work of such institutions as Hull House, Chicago, Teynbee

Hall and Mansfield House, London. It is not always the fault of the poor that they do not get along better. They do not know how. They can be taught by those who can and will take the necesary steps to learn and appreciate their needs.

3. Paul's work in Corinth evidently *brought cure for the despondency he was in when he came there.* Coming from Athens where he had such ill success, he said, "I came to you in weakness, and fear, and much trembling." Anyway we know that there is good cheer in work—not in worry, but in work. The London physician told his rich patient: "Live on three shillings a day and *earn it.*". Work is wholesome for an individual. It is wholesome also for a church. There is nothing like exercise to keep people warm and well.

4. Paul's word *deepened his personal love for Christ.* This was because he did his business for Christ and in his name. Business is a means of grace when the underlying motive for its doing is love for Christ and a purpose to do his will in the spot where he has placed us. "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." There is no such thing as being too busy for religion. But there is such a thing as living so that "whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do all shall be done to God's honor and glory."

Let us not think unkindly of our toil. We would soon weary of idleness. Honest work is a blessing and may be a real means of grace.

Christ Raising the Widow's Son.

"And it came to pass the day after, that He went into a City called Nain." etc. Luke 7: 11-15.

This miracle shows Christ as a central figure and emphasizes certain aspects of His nature.

1. It shows *His supernatural knowledge.* How natural it is with us all when we find ourselves or others in great distress or anxiety, like the Psalmist, to ask the question: "Doth God know?" How often is our poor, feeble faith ready to wonder if God really knows how poor we are, how greatly tempted we are, how sorely afflicted, or in what bitter anxiety we are. And what a comfort it is, then, to be assured that He does see and know and understand all about us. Christ knew of that death far over in Nain, understood entirely the poor widow's circumstances, and timed His visit to the city in order to meet that funeral procession. Not only does Christ see and know, but He cares.

2. We see here revealed *Christ's sympathy.* Jesus met the procession. He saw it all, and felt it all, and His heart went out in compassion toward that poor, afflicted mother. No sigh or tear ever fails to awaken a sympathetic response in His great, tender heart. It was true then. It is true now. "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities."

3. The incident reveals also *Christ's authority.* Tho He was a stranger, yet when Christ came and touched the bier the bearers felt in some strange way that He possessed authority, and they "stood still"—submitted at once to His will.

4. Above all, the incident reveals *His almighty power.* It is easy for one of us to say, "Weep not," to a broken-hearted fellow-creature, but hard for us to dry up the tears. Jesus did both. We see how quickly he turned grief into gladness by giving back the dead boy to his mother. "Young man," He exclaimed, "I say unto thee, rise." That voice was one mighty in operation. At once "he that was dead sat up and began to speak." Death relinquished his prey in the presence if his Conqueror. Christ came to abolish death and bring life and immortality to light.

a. Let us see in this miracle a pledge of that solemn event the general resurrection. The same power that here raised one dead person can and will raise all mankind at the appointed time. All things are equally easy to Him, for all power is given unto Him. "They that are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth. Death shall be swallowed up in victory.

b. We may take this miracle also as a parable of redemption. Many about us are dead in sin. Many a mother weeps more bitterly to-day over her wandering boy than if she were following him to the tomb. The one great need of those dead in sin is the life of which Christ alone is the source. In Him is life. He can raise to a new life souls that now seem dead in worldliness and sin. Let us never despair of any soul. Let us pray for our children and faint not. There may be young men and young women who seem long traveling in the way to ruin; but let us pray on. Who can tell but He who met the funeral at the gates of Nain may yet meet our unconverted one, and say with almighty power, "Young man, arise."

The Security of Believers.

"And we know that all things work together for good for them that love God." Rom. 8: 28.

It is one of the luxuries of Christian faith to believe that all things are coming out right. There is far too wide-spread a feeling among men that things will come out wrong. But these are pessimists, and Christians should be optimists. To know that the great tides of life are working toward God gives us a sense of security and much spiritual enjoyment.

The words of this text give us:

1. *Confidence that the machinery of God's control is managed safely.* "All things work together." Providential events are like the cogs of a machine which so fit that the desired result is reached. They tell us that in Geneva, Switzerland, is a watch factory, the largest in the world, employing three thousand persons. One will work on one part, and another on another part, but when from every department of the factory the pieces are put togther, the result is a perfect timepiece. So we may know that God is controlling and guiding our lives, and all things, to bring out a perfect result.

2. *Assurance of present blessing.*

The hope that we have is not simply that good will come to us by and by, but this providential control of God is bringing our highest present good. It is certainly a comfort to go about with the consciousness that all things are, day by day, working for our good.

3. *Self-possession.*

We have real bravery in going forward in duty

when we know that God is overarching our lives.

4. *Enjoyment of our work.*

It is not work, but worry, that kills. Someone has asked the question: "Why is it that a little child can run about from morning until night without ever seeming to get tired? If sleep gets him at all, it has to catch him on the fly?" But the answer is that the child does its work and lets the father take the worry. If we would live life in that way, we would find much more enjoyment and our work would not weary. Let us do the work and let our Heavenly Father take the worry.

5. *Courage to bear hardships.*

If we only understood the meaning of God's dealing with us we would never complain. The block of marble may not understand why it must be chipped and chiseled and polished, but the finished figure shows the wisdom of the artist. When we are conscious that God is controlling our lives and making all things work together for good, we bear the discipline, rejoicing in the fact that our light afflictions which are but for a moment, will work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

6. *Makes us cheerful Christians.*

As we view history we have the consciousness that God is controlling and is bringing about his good will. As we look upon our own lives we have the same cheerful hope that he is making all things work together for our good, and this fills us with delight and good cheer.

Let us, like Paul, maintain this belief as a positive conviction. "We know." We know that all things

work together for good. As a parent you send your child to school. The child sees no good that can come of it. You do. Some of life's tasks are done in tears, but God makes them work out our eternal good.

Let us be convinced as Paul that *all things* "work together" for good. This means our poverty as well as our prosperity. This means our losses as well as our gains. To be sure, we should never forget that this is a conditional promise. It does not say that all things work together for good for everybody, but all things work together for good "for them that love God."

Christ's Redeeming Love.

"In Whom we have redemption thro His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." Eph. 1 : 7.

Redemption is the most glorious work of God. It is greater than His work of creation. Paul delighted to dwell upon this theme. The reason was that he himself had experienced Christ's redeeming love. He had been redeemed from the error of his ways, from the curse and bondage of the law, washed in Christ's blood, endowed with His Spirit and made an Apostle of the cross—well might he glory in his Redeemer.

To redeem means to buy back, to pay the ransom price. This is what Christ did for us when we were captive under sin.

I. First, consider THE NECESSITY FOR OUR REDEMPTION. The sinner is a captive.

1. *To sin.* "Jesus answered them: Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." (John 8: 34). We feel that bondage. We know that sin rules and reigns within us.

2. *To Satan.* Paul speaks of sinners as, thro Christ, "recovering themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. 11: 26).

3. *Under the law.* We have broken the law of God, and for this reason "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin." (Gal. 3: 2). The literal meaning is, "shut up in prison." The idea being that justice has put us under arrest for violating the law.

An imprisoned captive is in a state of darkness. "Having their understanding darkened." (Eph. 4: 18).

A captive is bound in fetters. So are sinners "in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity."

The captive is an exile, away from his father's house and fellowship.

The captive is in a state of wretchedness and misery, "poor and miserable and blind and naked." Oh, how great is our need of redemption!

II. But, thanks be to God, He does not leave us in this condition but provides for our redemption. Let us think, then, secondly, of the AGENT OF OUR REDEMPTION. "In Whom we have redemption." The person is Christ, our Savior. "For even the son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "He offered himself thro the eternal Spirit without spot unto God." "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall

save his people from their sins." "He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

III. THE MEANS OF REDEMPTION. It is stated: "In Whom we have redemption thro His blood." "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, * * * * but with the precious blood of Christ." Christ voluntarily took our place. He stood charged with our sins and paid the penalty with His blood. Amazing love!

IV. THE BLESSED FRUITS OF REDEEMING LOVE: "Even the forgiveness of sins." "In Whom we have redemption thro His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Grace is unmerited favor, and His forgiveness is according to His abounding favor, without limit by our demerit. He casts our sins behind His back. He blots them out of the book of His remembrance. He sinks them into the depths of the sea—the depest places, where they never can be reached or brought up again to face us. He forgives according to the riches of his grace."

A king once offered a subject a very munificent present, for some service. The subject said: "This is too much for me to receive." The king replied: "But it is not too much for me to give." He was rich and gave according to his ability to give. God is very rich and very loving and when he gives it is "according to the riches of his grace."

Let us receive and estimate at their true worth God's gift of redemption love and forgiveness of our sins, knowing that out of this manifestation of His grace there come to us also justification, peace, adoption, hope and Heaven.

Testing by Tasting.

"O, taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." Ps. 34: 8.

It is but natural for those who have tasted of God's goodness and grace to command Him and his service to others. Philip commended Christ to Nathaniel when he doubted if any good thing could come out of Nazareth. Philip said, "Come and see." The Samaritan woman was met and blessed by Christ, and then went into the city and exclaimed: "Come out and see." When a physician heals us of some dread disease, we recommend him to all that we know who have like affliction. We say to them, "Just try him. He healed me, and I am sure that he can heal you, too. Call him. Put yourself in his hands. Test him and see."

David had drunk deep of the cup of God's grace, and in strong desire that others should put God to the test and have like experience with himself, he exclaimed, "O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man who trusteth in him!"

So in commending Christ to the unsaved to-day, each Christian would gladly exclaim,

> "I cannot tell how precious
> The Savior is to me,
> I only can entreat you
> To come, and taste, and see."

I. We have here first, A CHEERING TRUTH. The Lord is "good." God manifests his goodness in creation; in the variety, in the beauty, in the order of creation, and in the abundance with which the world is made to teem. He manifests his goodness also in providence, in his general control in the world and his

particular direction of our lives.

His goodness is shown especially in redemption. How good he is to have purchased our redemption at so great a cost, even the precious blood of Christ his Son.

II. There is here, secondly, AN INVALUABLE BLESSING. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Oh, how many are the blessings that come to the trustful soul. There is the blessing of pardon. There is the blessing of peace. There is the blessing of His saving grace; His loving helpfulness; His deliverance from enemies; His infilling of the Holy Spirit; His revelation of himself, and of His abiding presence with his children. Indeed, blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.

III. There is here A MOST URGENT INVITATION. "O, taste and see."

1. This is the *language of experience.* The person invites because he has enjoyed.

2. It is *prompted by love.* It is love for others as well as love for God that leads us to invite men to taste and see.

3. It is an INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE. We want them to taste with us the blessing that we have found.

4. But bear in mind that we must TASTE IN ORDER TO SEE. We might read many books in striving to know what the taste of honey is like, but the only way one can really know is to taste and see. Testing is knowing. Seeing is believing. If you have any doubt as to the blessedness of being a disciple of Christ, then let me entreat you come, and taste, and see. He is "good." It is beyond the power of words to tell how

good he is. He is good in His way of receiving sinners. He does not upbraid us with our sins, but graciously accepts and forgives. He is good in His loving helpfulness. We fear the danger of failing, if we enter the Christian life, but we will not fail because he gives us His strength and help. He is good as a master. Some masters are hard and ill-treat their servants, but oh how kind and good Christ is as a master when we serve Him! He is good as a rewarder. The reward of Christian service is rich in this present life and richer than words can tell in the life that is to come.

The Peace Christ Gives.

"My peace give I unto you."—John 16:33.

This is one of Christ's sweetest assurances to His followers—that He will give us peace. And it is a special kind or quality of peace he promises. The emphasis is upon the word "My." *"My* peace I give unto you." The peace is the same deep, abiding, and blessed peace He enjoyed.

It was not the peace of affluence. Some of us think we would have peace if we had in our posession all the things we long for. We feel quite sure that if we had wealth and the things wealth can purchase we would have peace. But none of these things did Christ have. His peace was not founded on affluence. And affluence would never give us peace.

Neither was his the peace of tranquility. Some of us are so hurried in our lives, so pressed with duties

that we long for the peace of tranquility. But Christ had not this. He was hurried and pressed upon, opposed by enemies, appealed to by friends. His was the very opposite to a tranquil life. The peace he gives, then, is not the peace of tranquility.

Neither was His peace the peace of congenial companionship. On the contrary, He was solitary. Few understood Him or were able to enter into sympathy with Him and His plans. His was not the peace of congenial companionship and friendship. Therefore, that is not the kind of peace He promises His followers.

The peace Christ had and the peace He gives is something different from what the world calls peace. It is something deeper and worthier, too.

What, then, is the peace he gives?

1. *It is peace of conscience.* Sin is war. Sin is strife. Sin puts discord into our lives. Conscious of sin, we cannot be at peace. Christ's peace was the peace of sinlessness. In the midst of all His press of work and the disturbances that surrounded Him He had the peace of conscious integrity, of oneness with His Father—the peace of sinlessness. This is one feature of the peace He gives us—the peace of pardon, the peace of justification. Thro our acceptance of His righteousness He gives us the peace of sinlessness. He makes us free from sin and to enjoy the deep and abiding peace of one just before God.

2. He gives us *peace of character.* He had the peace of a sound, stable, right centered character where there was no internal discord or struggle. His character had unity, harmony of purpose, was not disturbed by fickle-

ness or changefulness. It is a great thing to possess a unified character. We do not easily attain it. We approve the right, but do the wrong. We are all Dr. Jeykl and Mr. Hydes. We are dual characters, torn by conflict within. But Christ's peace was that of confirmed character, stable, sound, unified. This is the peace He will give us and does give us as we accept it. This is one of His greatest gifts.

3. He gives the peace of *abiding trustfulness.* This peace also Christ had. How often we hear Him exclaiming, "My Father," and showing the utmost confidence in Him. He never seemed to be the least disturbed, but believed that God's will was always good. He gives us this peace so we can truly exclaim: "I worship thee, sweet will of God." "Thy will is my peace." In the midst of afflictions and trials and troubles we have, thro Christ, the peace of abiding trust in God.

4. Lastly, notice that this peace He gives us *is the source of power.* Without peace there is no power. when the mind and heart are disturbed and torn with the consciousness of sin, doubleness of character and the fear of distrust, we are devoid of power; our hands are enfeebled, our hearts are distracted, our energy is dissipated. But when we have peace, the peace Christ gives, we are "free to serve," we have courage for undertaking and energy with which to bring success. Let us accept of Christ's peace, deep, continuous, abiding peace. Most desirable of gifts is it, and we can have it if we will accept it.

The Conqueror's Reward.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, ... and I will write upon him my new name." Rev. 3: 10.

This is a part of the epistle addressed to the church in Philadelphia. The language is commendatory of their fidelity to Christ and his cause, enjoins upon them absolute attachment to the end ,and promises everlasting happiness in the heavenly temple if they continue faithful unto death. As some one has said, this call "is the voice of the Almighty Conqueror to all the soldiers of His cross."

I. Consider first, THE CHARACTER OF THOSE TO WHOM THE PROMISE IS MADE. "Him that overcometh." This promise is not made indiscriminately. Like all the promises of God, it is made conditionally. It is associated with Christian character. He that fights and overcomes shall win. He that is indifferent to the conflict shall lose the victor's crown and joy.

II. Consider secondly, THE CONTEST IMPLIED. The term, "Him that overcometh" implies contact and contest with real enemies, strong and fierce and difficult to conquer.

And how many are there of such enemies the Christian must combat! The subjugation of his own evil propensities, pride, envy, indolence, lust, hardness of heart, is no small undertaking. Neither is the battle he must wage against the evil designs and artful cunning and bold opposition of Satan. Neither is the maintenance of faith, hope, patience and resignation in seasons of adversity, or the opposing of error or the

spreading and defending of the truth.

> "Sure I must fight, if I would reign,
> Increase my courage, Lord."

III. Consider, thirdly, SOME OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS PROMISE.

1. This figurative promise intimates that the Christian conqueror shall be a monumental pillar in the heavenly temple. The scene of his happiness is in heaven, and part of the source of it will be the honor and the value he will have there. A temple pillar is partly for ornament and partly for support. The idea suggested is that the faithful Christian will contribute to the beauty and just proportions of the heavenly temple, while at the same time he will be honored as if he were a pillar which was necessary for the support of the temple. The heavenly Chruch, as is the earthly, is a temple, and Christians are parts of it.

2. These pillars shall be inscribed with delightful intimations. With the name of God to denote that each redeemed one belongs to God; with the name of the City of God to make plain that each spiritual conqueror is a citizen of heaven. With "my new name," even that of Christ, the Redeemer, to proclaim the saved one his, a trophy of his victory over Satan, sin and death.

3. These pillars shall be eternally fixed in the temple of God. "And he shall go no more out." The spiritual conqueror shall be permanent as a part of that heavenly temple. The idea of "going out" does not properly belong to a "pillar," but the speaker here has in mind the man, tho represented as a column. The truth taught is that if we reach heaven our happiness

will be secure forever. The pillars in Solomon's porch were removed and carried away by the Chaldeans, but these pillars shall be perpetual. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

The Discipline of Difficulties.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

James 1: 12.

No man ever worked his way spiritually in a dead calm. We all need some retarding winds to help us forward, some testing trials to put force and fibre into our souls.

1. Take it, for instance, *in the matter of temptation.* Did it ever occur to you to thank God for temptation? Do you ever think of your temptations as blessings? And yet they are. It is an inspired apostle who writes: "Count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations." Do you count it so? Again: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." Do you esteem temptations as a part of your blessedness? And yet what kind of a moral invertebrate would you be without temptation? Valueless is the character that knows no testing, and insipid the happiness that has in it nothing of the joy of overcoming. There is even a way of so meeting temptations as to really get benefit and blessing from them. Rightly meeting and victoriously resisting ever puts new fibre into the soul. The Indians have a saying that when a warrior slays a foe the spirit of the

vanquished enemy enters the victor's heart and adds new strength for every coming contest. This becomes a literal fact in the spiritual warfare. We grow stronger thro our struggles and our victories. Every time we overcome a temptation we are made stronger to overcome the next one, and then the next, and the next, and so on.

2. The same principle holds good in regard to all *the responsibilities we must bear.* We learn to walk by walking; we learn to write by writing; we learn to work by working, and we learn to bear responsibilities by bearing responsibilities. No devout Christian worker ever began any service for God feeling strong and self-reliant and self-sufficient. He always faces the effort in conscious weakness and fear and much trembling. But it is as he goes on to do his duty that God's grace and cheer come to him, and he becomes strong and capable and successful as a worker.

3. *Trial and afflictions work their good results in the same way.* Many of the sweetest joys of Christian hearts are songs which they have learned in the bitterness of trial. A story is told of a little bird that would never learn to sing the song the master would have him sing, while his cage was full of light. There was so much to take his attention. He would listen to the many voices. He would learn a snatch of one song, a trill of another, a polyglot of all the songs in the grove, but never a separate and entire melody of his own. But the master at last covered the cage he was in, and made it dark all about him. Then he listened and listened to the one song he was to sing, and tried and tried, and tried again, until at last his heart

was full of it. Then, when he had caught the melody, his cage was uncovered, and he went on singing it sweetly ever after in the light. It is often with our hearts as with that bird. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward—we all need to have regard to the afterward of trial—afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."

This whole thought may be emphasized in a brief but suggestive parable. It is about the wingless birds. There is a myth about the birds that when they were first created they had no wings. The story is that God made the wings, put them down before the birds, and said: "Now, come, take these burdens up and bear them." The birds had beautiful plumage and voices. They could sing and shine, but they could not soar. But at the word of their Maker they took up the wings with their beaks and laid them upon their shoulders to carry. At first they seemed to be a heavy load, and rather difficult to bear. But as they cheerfully and patiently bore them, and folded them close over their hearts, lo! the wings grew fast, and that which they once bore now bore them. The burdens became pinions, and the weights became wings.

Fellow Christians, we are the wingless birds. Our duties are the pinions. When at first we assume them they do seem to be heavy loads. But, glad and happy fact, as we cheerfully bear them on, as we obediently take up the tasks God gives, as we meet the difficulties, as we do the duties, the burdens change to pinions, the weights become wings and lift us heavenward.

Little Sins.

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines." Song of Sol. 2: 15.

Henry M. Stanley tells that when he was passing thro the forests of Darkest Africa, the most formidable foes he encountered, those that caused the greatest loss of life to his caravan, and came near defeating his expedition, were the Wambutti dwarfs. These diminutive men had only little bows and arrows for weapons, so small that they looked like children's playthings; but upon the tip of each tiny arrow was a drop of poison which would kill an elephant or a man as surely and quickly as a rifle. Their defense was by means of poison and traps. They would steal thro the dense forest and, waiting in ambush, let fly their deadly arrows before they could be discovered. They dug ditches and carefully covered them over with sticks and leaves. They fixed spikes in the ground and tipped them with poison. Into these ditches and on these spikes man and beast would fall or step to their death. One of the strangest things about it was that their poison was made from honey.

It is thus that Satan wages his destructive warfare against God's people. Stealthily, under cover of darkness, by treachery, with weapons seemingly harmless, thro the sweets of life, he comes clothed as "an angel of light." Yet how deadly are the little honey-coated sins which he administers, how sure the destruction of him who is deceived into wandering from the straight and narrow way.

1. *What are some of these sins usually thought of as little sins?*

There are sins which by comparison with great sins men call little. Ill temper in family, commercial and church relations, a light and frivolous spirit, remissness in religious duties, social whispering, slandering and backbiting, vanity and folly in dress, indulgence in hurtful amusements, careless and impure conversation, pride, etc. There are a host of these "little foxes" we might easily find.

2. *What is the harm they do?*

They injure our consciences by hardening them; they relax our devotions and communion with God; they hinder the presence of Christ with us, and, especially, they make way for greater sins.

There is an Indian story of a morsel of a dwarf, who asked a king to give him all the ground he could cover with three strides. The king, seeing him so small, said, "Certainly;" whereupon the dwarf suddenly shot up into a tremendous giant, covering all the land with the first stride, all the water with the second, and with the third, knocked the king down and took his throne.

It is said that a man was one day strolling along in the country, when he noticed a magnificent golden eagle flying bravely upward. He watched it with delight and admiration, and as he did so he noticed that something was wrong with it. It seemed unable to go any higher. Soon it began to fall, and then it lay at his feet a lifeless mass.

What could be the matter? No human hand had harmed it. No sportsman's shot had reached it. He went and examined the bird, and what did he find? It had carried up with it a little weasel in its talons,

and as it drew them near to its body for flight, the little creature had wormed itself out of them and drunk the life-blood from the eagle's breast.

How like this is all sin! It may appear a little thing, but it fastens upon the soul and works death and destruction.

3. *How must little sins be dealt with?*

Not tenderly, but connivingly; but they must be "taken." We must take them or they will take us. We must down with them, or they will down with us. We must watch against and pray against and fight against even the smallest of sins, or by and by we will be overcome of sin.

The Happiness of Hunger.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Matt. 5: 6.

These words are a part of Christ's famous sermon on the mount. The multitudes who listened must have been greatly surprised at the language used, for Christ opened his address by announcing the blessedness, the happiness, of the poor, the sorrowful, the weak, the hungry, the persecuted, the reviled. These were not the things men were accustomed to count as part of their blessedness. Nevertheless, what Christ said then, as always, was true,—true for the people of his day and true for us. This will be manifest as we go on to think.

I. First, of THE OBJECT OF DESIRE MENTIONED,—"Righteousness." Hungering and thirsting after

righteousness implies that the sinner is convinced that he has none, and yet cannot be happy without it. The language implies a sense of spiritual need. The awakened soul longs for rightness of relation before God and for righteousness of life.

II. Consider, secondly, THE DISPOSITION MANIFESTED,—"hungering and thirsting." Nothing could better express especially ardent desire after righteousness than hunger and thirst. No appetites are so keen; none so imperiously demand supply. They occur repeatedly; and when unsatisfied nothing is more distressing. Hunger, we say, will break thro stone walls. Thirst unsatisfied is intolerable. An ancient king, suffering with thirst, said, "I will give my kingdom for a cupful of water." So the sinner, conscious of his guilt, feels that righteousness is a matter of life and death with him. He longs and prays for it: "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" "Create in me a clean heart, O God," etc.

III. But notice especially THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO DO THUS HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS,—"They shall be filled." As God never inspires desires and petitions but with a design to satisfy, those who hunger and thirst after salvation may depend on being speedily blessed, and those who long for more righteousness of life will be given grace to attain it.

1. Such longing is the best sign of *spiritual health.* It is a hopeful sign when the sick man begins to have a desire for food. We need never lose hope for any who really crave spiritual blessings.

2. Such longing *stimulates to endeavor.* Woe be to

us if we have reached the goal of our hopes, have nothing more to wish for, no higher attainments toward which to strive.

Probably the most perfect piece of marble ever wrought by human hands is the statue of theChrist by Thorwaldsen. Those who have seen it in the Metropolitan Church at Copenhagen say that the whole light of the story of the gospel seems to stream down upon them from the stone as they look at it. The artist wrought a long while upon it, and with intense joy and enthusiasm, but when it was completed, a deep melancholy settled over him. When asked the reason for this, he said that his genius was decaying. 'Here is my statue of Christ; it is the first of my works with which I have felt satisfied. Till now my ideal has always been far beyond what I could execute. But it is no longer so. I shall never have a great idea again." To him satisfaction was the sure indication of the limit of achievement. The same holds good in all realms of life, physical, intellectual and spiritual. Happy are they who hunger. Their craving pushes them on to higher things.

3. Finally, as we have intimated before, such longing is a *prophesy of satisfaction.* "Blessed—for they shall be filled." God does not mock us. He never implanted a desire in a human soul without at the same time providing for its fulfillment. The fact that there is thirst proves that there is also water. When we are hungry we know that there is bread somewhere. So my spiritual longings are prophesies of spiritual fulfillments. They tell me of possibilities of attainment that lie before. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Wounded by a Friend.

"And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." Zech. 13: 6.

Christ "came to his own, and his own received him not." He was crucified by his own people—the Jews; and yet he was pleased to call them His friends, even as he did Judas in the very act of betraying Him, when he said: "Friend, wherefore hast thou come?"

There are no hurts Christ gets that pain like those he receives from his friends. He was wounded in the house of his friends. He is too often thus treated still. Is it not hard to suffer evil at the hands of those we truly love? Let us think of the wounds Christ gets from those he loves. Let us take the thought to ourselves and inquire how we who profess to love Christ and who own that he loves us, wound him.

1. First, *we wound by denying our Savior.* How many times and in how many ways we do deny him! How many opportunities there are for Christians to say with Peter: "I know not the man." That was a very painful wound Peter gave his Master. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." He did not speak; he did not cry out, "Shame!" What did he do? He turned and looked upon Peter, and completely broke the man's heart. What was there in that look? It was the pain of a wound from a friend. Does the eye of Jesus ever look memories at any of us? Memories of broken vows, unfulfilled promises, forgotten pledges?

Again, there are Christians, real Christians, who have never confessed Christ, and so wound him. The world says: "Art thou not one of this man's disciples?" You are, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, and so you say, "No." Christians ask: "Art thou not also one of this man's disciples?" Again you say, "No." How it does wound a friend when you are ashamed to recognize him as a friend! It is a slight that love cannot endure, but stabs it to the death. Secret disciple, you may love Christ, but your secrecy wounds him; and the wound is a wound from a friend.

2. *We wound by disobeying the Savior.* We mean more especially by willful disobedience. No wound can be so painful to Christ as willful sin on the part of his loved ones. How it pains a mother to see her own daughter knowingly do what will displease! How it pains a loving father to have his loved and trusted son ignore his well-known wishes! How it pains a friend to have another friend deliberately hurt his feelings! And so by disobedience, real Christians sometimes knowingly "crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to open shame." This Friend, too, is one who had made the greatest possible sacrifice for us, and yet, we treat him so. It is hard to understand how Christians can ever be so unkind.

3. *We wound by lack of fidelity to our Savior.* Of course, all sin is lack of fidelity; but we are speaking now of sins which show a low state of religion in the heart—a special lack of devotion and loyalty. A great many Christians seem to walk as near the line between right and wrong as ever they can just so they do not go clear over. It is a bad sign when you hear a Chris-

tian asking for little rules for duty. A loving, loyal devotion does not need rules to define fine points between right and wrong. It is bondage when we serve Christ because we must. It is the highest liberty when we serve him because we wish to—because we love him and really desire to do what will please him. It is not hard to do the wishes of one we love. Lack of Christian decision, unfaithfulness to our vows, sinful indulgence, pleasure seeking at the expense of religion and character—these are all ways in which we may wound Christ—ways in which he is far too often wounded in the house of his friends. Let us watch against wounding him. Let us do our best to serve him lovingly and well.

The Need of Haste.

"Brethren, the time is short." 1 Cor. 7: 29.

Paul is here giving advice to the Corinthian Christians. He had been with them for two years. He had labored faithfully and had established a church in the midst of the splendid, but dissipated city of Corinth. In answer to a letter from them, he gives them advice upon various subjects, as marriage, the eating of meats offered to idols, the dress of women in public, the exercise of spiritual gifts, and the making of collections for the poor. He tells them not to go to law one with another, teaches the doctrine of the resurrection, instructs them in regard to temperance and chastity, exhorts them to Christian living, not by rule, but from love, and urges them to general faithfulness by

this conclusion, "Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that both they who have wives be as tho they had none, and they that weep as tho they wept not, and they that rejoice, as tho they rejoiced not, and they that buy, as tho they possessed not, and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness." That is, he would have them not full of over-anxiety, in view especially of the shortness of life and the fact that the fashion of this world passeth away.

I. In the first place, this verse says to each of us, BRETHREN, THE TIME IS SHORT FOR PREPARATION. Time is short to us all in reference to eternity. Eternity is long. Life is like a sleep. When we sleep, time flies swiftly. Life is like a dream; a dream is over before we know it. Life is like a tale that is told. When an interesting story is told, how swiftly time flies! Life is like grass and flowers. They spring up but to quickly wither. Life is like the swift ships. How quickly they sail by. Life is like mist or vapor, "that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." Preparation for eternity must be made. How short a time there is for it! If you are going to prepare, do it now.

II. This verse says to us again, BRETHREN, THE TIME IS SHORT FOR WORK. The time for working is short, therefore, let us begin to-day. "The night cometh wherein no man can work."

1. There is much work to be done for *ourselves.* Because life is so short, let us be up and at it. If we are to overcome evil and cultivate the good and be-

come what God would have us be, we can afford to lose no time.

2. There is much work to be done *for others.* Other lives, too, are short. If we are going to help them, we must do it now. We are sure of no other time. Use it well.

III. This verse says to us again, BRETHREN, THE TIME IS SHORT FOR USING THIS WORLD. We are to "use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." This word "fashion" is a stage word, meaning scenery. That is, the things of this world pass quickly, like successive pieces of scenery on the stage. To-day becomes yesterday so quickly! Witness the rapid changes in your neighborhood, among your friends, in the events of life.

1. Brethren, the time is short for using this world, therefore, *do not be entirely taken up with the business of life.* "Buy, but be as tho you possessed not." Business is honorable, but do not cling too strongly to earthly things.

2. Brethren, the time is short for using the world, therefore, *do not be wrapped up in its enjoyments.* "Let them that rejoice, be as tho they rejoiced not." This Scripture does not say "Be sad;" but, "Rejoice." Religion is not gloomy or melancholy. Do not drape it in mourning. Christians may have much earthly joy. They may love society; but they are not to let pleasure be the supreme thing. They may have and love friends and family; but they must not let regard for these interfere with their devotion to God.

IV. This Scripture says, once more, BRETHREN THE TIME IS SHORT FOR TROUBLE AND SORROW. Su-

preme love to God and faith in him puts limits to sorsow. "Let them that weep be as tho they wept not." Religion does not remove trouble, but softens it.

1. If we struggle against poverty, then the time is short for the struggle.

2. If we must meet persecution, then the time is short for our suffering.

3. If we are fighting against sin, then the time is short for the battle.

4. Especially, if we are sorrowing over separation from loved ones gone before, then, brethren, the time is short until we shall meet them. "Weep, but weep as tho you wept not." Do not let your sorrow overcome you, or make you less faithful. Let us restrain our grief in the hope of the life to come and the happy meetings there.

5. Especially, do not permit yourself to be fretful and over-anxious. "I would have you without carefulness." The meaning is that we should not be filled with over-anxiety. The apostle would have us believe in God, in his love, his wisdom, his power, his providence. Do not be over-anxious as to any worldly things. Use, but do not abuse the world. Do not be over-engrossed in your business. Work for yourselves and for others, filling your life with meaning. Bear poverty and persecution, and battle against sin. Do not mourn unduly for your friends. Do not let your sorrow unnerve you, but go on in life the way they would wish you to do. Live to meet them. Be not procrastinating, sinner. Now is the accepted time. Brethren, let us make our lives full of usefulness and growth in grace and ourselves prepared for heaven; and all the more in view of the fact that the time we have is so short.

A Birthright Bargained Away.

"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God," etc.—Heb. 12:15-17.

A birthright bargained away! This was the extreme folly of Esau. We doubt if ever, since the world began, there was struck so thoughtless, so foolish, so insane a bargain. Think of it! For one short moment's gratification he signed away his inheritance, he stepped out of the royal line; as with a single stroke of the pen he struck his name off the roll of the honorable and the great, only to have it head the long list of fools who have bartered away life's spiritual possibilities to gratify the fleeting pleasures of the flesh. In another place it is recorded: "Thus Esau despised his birthright." It is a terrible word, "despised," but no milder one would meet the case.

God intended this account as a perpetual warning to us all. We must recognize that this incident of Esau carries with it some very practical lessons. One of them, to which we give our first attention, is this:

I. That IN ALL SPIRITUAL THINGS MEN BARTER AWAY THEIR BIRTHRIGHT WHENEVER THEY SACRIFICE THE FUTURE TO THE PRESENT. How many people there are who seem to live under the absolute dominion of the present. It is the most common cause of poverty. It is the thing back of all we speak of as "hand-to-mouth living." It is the mother of ignorance. It is the source of all habits of indolence and intemperance and impurity. As against the interests of religion it is the very essence of the worldly spirit; it is not so much a spirit of downright wickedness as of, Esau-like, weakly

yielding to the hunger for mere temporary gratification. Esau saw before him the possibility of immediate enjoyment. His future interests were distant and vague and shadowy. And it was as tho he said, "Let the future take care of itself; 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush;' I am going to take these dainty morsels while I can get them." Precisely so are men acting today, and, like Esau, in doing so they are playing the fool.

II. This brings us to notice a second, tho kindred thought, namely that WHEN ANYONE PARTS WITH HIS BIRTHRIGHT HE MAKES A WOEFULLY BAD BARGAIN. There are some men of so little business tact that they always get cheated in a bargain. It would be better for them to keep what they already have and never engage in trade. So do men point with scorn at this famous transaction when Esau for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; and yet there are multitudes of people everywhere who are making far more shocking and ridiculous bargains.

1. Men barter their birth right for *pleasure*. Examples of this we see every day .

2. Men barter their birthright too, for *fame*. Henry of Navarre made a choice between the crown of France and his soul,—between fame and Christ. He deliberately decided to accept the kingdom and sacrifice his religion. What do you think of his bargain?

3. How sadly common it is, too, for men to barter their birthright for *gold*. There are men all about us who are selling their souls for a mere pittance of this world's goods. There are men in all our communities who are selling their souls and destroying the souls of

hundreds of others, for the paltry consideration of the few dollars which they receive across a saloon bar; while their customers ,among the rich and poor alike, are daily bartering their souls for rum to feed a depraved appetite. The whole truth of the matter is this, that sin is a great cheat; that Satan is bad pay. When anyone parts with his birthright at any price, he makes a woefully bad bargain.

III. One other lesson; it is this, that as in the case of Esau, WHEN THE BARGAIN IS ONCE MADE, YOU CAN NOT RUE. "For ye know that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, tho he sought it carefully with tears." In all God's Word I know of no thought more solemn than this—that there is such a think as unsuccessful repentance, regret that does not cure.

1. For example, suppose that you have foolishly bartered away the birthright of youth. Take a man who wakens up at 40 years of age and finds that his youth has been wasted, and then strives to get back his early advantages. Does he get them back?

2. Another example,—the case of parents who have bartered away their birthright of past faithfulness to their children. That parent who omits in the first ten years of a child's life to make an eternal impression for Christ and the good the chances are a thousand to one that he will never make it at all.

3. Just so is it, again, every time we barter away any single opportunity for doing good. There is nothing in this world so vain as trying to get back a lost opportunity.

4. Once more, we remind any who may be neglectful of the matter that the same danger threatens in regard to the soul's eternal redemption. God says, "My Spirit shall not always strive."

A few years ago our government decided to redeem all trade dollars at their face value, tho they were really worth only 85 cents. If on or before the 30th day of September, 1887, you had taken to the treasury those coins you would have received in exchange a full dollar for every one. But you cannot do that now. It is too late. The day of the redemption of that coin has passed. So there is a time for the redemption of every soul. If you let that time pass, it is gone, and once gone, it is gone forever.

The Evil of a Divided Heart.

"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty." Hosea 10: 2.

Israel, as a nation, divided its allegiance between Jehovah and Baal, and so was given up to captivity. Men and women suffer evil, also, as a result of a divided heart. It brings loss of spiritual blessing, and leads to results that are much to be deplored.

I. How does the having of a divided heart manifest itself?

1. *In the lack of a single-hearted reliance upon Christ for salvation.* There are persons who possess faith in Christ, and yet they rely upon self. None but Christ can save them; they canot save themselves, and yet they fail in making Christ the only ground of their

hope. They try to mix grace and works. They forget that we are saved by grace alone. After we are saved we have the privilege and duty of working as much as we will, but there is but one Savior, Christ, our Lord, and he must be trusted entirely for redemption.

2. *In the lack of a single-hearted love for God and his character.* God is not loved at all if he is not loved wholly. As Saint Augustine has said: "How seldom is Jesus loved for Jesus." God wants a sincere and single-hearted love from us, and there are many who profess to serve him who do not love him in this way and revere his character as they ought.

3. *In the lack of a single-hearted loyalty to God and his service.* "No man can serve two masters." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." There are too many who try to render this kind of half-hearted service.

II. How are those possessed of a divided heart regarded by God? They are "found faulty." In other words, their condition is not such as God can improve. They are faulty, because

1. *Not to depend on Christ solely is faulty.* When he purchases redemption for us, he wants us to accept of his finished work. When he forgives us, he wants us to believe that he pardons completely. When he saves us, he saves us fully and by his own almighty power. We cannot be otherwise than faulty in his sight if we try to take away from the completeness of his work.

2. *Not to love singly is faulty.* Christ is insulted when a rival is admitted. In this respect his love is like a husband for a wife or a wife for a husband; it

demands single-heartedness. Those whose hearts are divided, whose love is thus faulty, cannot be pleasing to Christ.

3. *Not to serve singly is faulty.* If a minister of Christ were, in his work, to aim at something else besides his proper effort for the good of souls, whether it be fame, learning, philosophy, rhetoric, or personal gain, he certainly would be a very faulty servant of God. And so with any Christian who does not have a single purpose to advance the kingdom, and do God's will, he is certainly manifesting a divided heart, and is found faulty. There are Christians who seem to wish to walk as near the line between right and wrong as ever they can, just so they are not clear over on the wrong side. Like some trees, they stand on the right side of the fence, but they lean a little over and when they fall they are sure to fall the wrong way. Such Christians show a lack of devotion. They want to get to heaven, but to enjoy just as much of sin and sinful pleasure as they possibly can, consistent with safety. They want to reach out just as far and gather as many of the flowers that grow on the edge of the dangerous precipice of sin as ever they can, just so they do not go over. They try Christ's patience and long-suffering love just as far as they dare, so he does not cast them off for ever.

Let us give God our whole heart. He says: "My son, give me thy heart." He says to a seeker: "Ye shall seek me and ye shall find me when ye shall search for me with all thy heart." In seeking God, in loving God, in serving God, he asks us to do it with the whole heart. Christ gave his whole heart to our redemption.

Let us give a whole heart to his service.

Whole hearted service is the way to the respect of our fellows. It is the way to personal happiness. It is the way to highest usefulness. It is the way to God's approval and richest rewards.

Called for a Purpose.

"Who knowest whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4: 14.

The historical acount in the book of Esther is familiar. Read in God's word, sung in cantata, studied in history, and so beautiful a story in itself, probably no portion of Scripture is more familiar to old and young alike. Let us apply the lesson of Esther's call to ourselves. You may think yourself small, but no one else can fill your place. Why not believe that you are raised up of God for a purpose? That you have some special powers with special opportunities? That there is a place in which you stand that no other living soul can stand? "Who knowest whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Why were you born when you were and where you were? Why are you living in this nineteenth century, and especially in this closing year of the century? Why were you entrusted with health and means, and position, and friends, and opportunity? "Who knowest whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

1. Remember, first, that like Esther, *you cannot separate your interests from those of your people and*

your God. Mordecai made it plain to Esther that she should not escape in the seclusion of the king's palace, were she to fail of her duty. He told her in case of her failure deliverance would arise to the Jews from another place, "but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." We are all bound together in a bundle of interests. "No man liveth to himself." Did the temptation ever come to you to think of yourself alone? It is the very badge of a disciple that he join not only Christ, but his cause; that he consider not alone himself, but others. You must give yourself to Christ to make his interests your interests, his life your life, his kingdom your kingdom, his glory your glory. You must let your personal welfare merge itself into the interests of your Lord. It will never do simply to accept Christ to save us without accepting him to rule over and in us. The very act of enlisting is the offering yourself for service.

2. Again, as in the case of Esther, *not only are your interests inseparably associated with those of your fellowmen, but they are, indeed, absolutely identical.* There are a great many people who think that they can be interested in religion or not, just as they please. No, they are mightily interested in religion whether they know it or not. We have seen in a religious periodical the account of a man in Texas who asked a misisonary of the Sunday-school Union if the Bible said anything about Sunday-schools, and declared himself opposed to them. Next morning, the missionary met this same man on an early train. The man said he was going after his half-grown boy, who had run away from home, and who was giving him a

great deal of trouble. "There ought to be a law to prevent such things," said the man. "There is a law," said the missionary, "the law of God." "Well, it was a bad orphan boy in the neighborhood who persuaded my son to run away," said the father. "That shows how our homes are not safe if there are bad boys around," said the missionary. The fact is that we must train other children or ours are not safe. That is the lesson that comes right home to all Christian parents. You cannot separate your interests into one little parcel. You must train other children or your own are not safe. The question of the prevalence of Christianity in your community touches you whether you know that it does or not. If your neighbor's yard is filthy, the disease germs will not respect your garden wall. They will come up into your windows, smite down your children, or yourself. Moral pestilence also concerns us all. If the cause of Christ suffers, you suffer; if the church suffers, you suffer; if the tone of morality suffers, you suffer; if a high ideal of Christian character suffers, you suffer with it. There are a great many people in every community who take no interest in religion; never attend church; pay nothing to the support of the gospel; and at least by their actions show that they care for none of these things. They think they can separate their interests from Christianity. Vain attempt!

3. Once more, this incident of Esther, so full of lessons, may well bring us another thought, as *to what an exalted position we have been brought, and why?* Was it not a strange thing that Esther, the foster child of a humble Jew, should rise from lowly rank to be

Queen of Persia? Yet, if we were to say that you have been raised to the position of kings and queens, it would be poor exultation compared with that which you have actually received. Kings and priests unto God! "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ!"

What then are the obligations of one so highly favored? God has a purpose toward others in our exultation. As truly as with Esther, so has he in your case. We are saved to save others. Why should not each of us feel that we have come to our kingdom for such a time as this? That we and our work fit together? Are you a teacher in the Sunday-school? Who knows but what you have come to your class at this very time to bring them all safe into the fold of Christ? Are you a young man, newly accepting the duties of church membership? Who knows but what God brought you into the church to be a wonderful blessing to the church? to meet the great need for men who will sacrifice and work and take responsibility in His name and for His sake? And how many Esthers there are, called to be queens? Society is bondage to evil practices. Death to all that is pure and true is threatened. "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" is the message to every Christian woman. You may be Israel's deliverer if you will. Each servant of God is called for a purpose. We each have a kingdom. To it we are brought for such a time as this. A holy confidence in God's divine purpose regarding us should fill us with mighty impulse toward a heroic life.

Spiritual Feeling.

"Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—I Pet. 1:8.

It is the usual experience of too many Christians that they have a little joy, some despair and much spiritual neglect. We began with a little feeling at conversion, but since that time our spiritual emotions have been fitful and unsatisfactory. After many vain attempts to maintain a desirable state of feeling we have given it up and have settled down to inaction and neglect of the inner life.

1. *It would seem that there ought to be some way of maintaining conscious and continuous fellowship with our Heavenly Father.*

God is our Father. We are his children; why can not we live conscious of his nearness, conscious of his love and glad of his interest in us?

2. *There is a great spiritual art in maintaining a settled and satisfactory state of heart.*

Here is a great field for study and practice of self-discipline. Feeling does not come of itself, founded on nothing. We have got to prepare for it, and practice the presence of God.

3. *In this verse it is made plain that feeling, the sense of spiritual blessedness is the result of faith.*

Now we know that faith has its foundation in knowledge. As we know God we have faith in him; and in proportion as we have faith in him we have peace, love, joy and spiritual blessedness. It is plain, then, that the right kind of spiritual feeling is not something hot, excited, extreme, such as can be main-

tained but a little while, and from which reaction is sure to come. It is rather a state of conscious living with the sense of God's presence and love and care.

There are Christians who live chiefly by emotion. They are like ships that move by sails. They are often in a dead calm, often out of their course and sometimes driven back; and it is only when the winds are fair and powerful that they move forward with rapidity. The others, and a more desirable kind of Christians, remind one of the great steamers which cross the ocean, moved by an international and permanent principle, setting at defiance all ordinary obstacles and advance steadily and swiftly to their destination thro calm and storm, thro cloud and sunshine.

4. *The importance of this matter of feeling.*

Some people think of it as of little importance. It is pleasant they think to have, but no special loss not to have, except of enjoyment.

a. First, it is important on account of its close connection with our peace and satisfaction in the religious life.

b. It is very important too, because of its santifying power. To realize God's presence is one of the mightiest means of excluding sin out of our lives.

c. It is important because upon it depends so largely our efficiency as Christians. If we have no sense of God's presence we lack power. With the sense of his nearness, and love, and approval, our power is greatly increased. We have courage. We have strength within.

Let us use the proper means to maintain a steady and desirable state of spiritual interest and feeling.

A Call to Heroism.

"Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Acts 5: 20.

The apostles of Christ are in the midst of persecution. An attempt is made to silence their preaching and stay the aggressive power of the Gospel. They are cast into prison. But an angel opens the doors and bids the messengers of the truth continue their work. "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."

In the word "stand" of this message, is an implied summons to Christian boldness. In the words "speak in the temple," is a call to heroic action. They were called to stand at the post of duty, at the very spot where they had been arrested, at the very centre of opposition. They were to speak to the people "all the words of this life." "Life" here means not the present life, nor the future life, but the spiritual life, the Christian life, the new life in Christ, which was the theme of the apostolic preaching.

They obeyed. "They entered into the temple early in the morning." They went as soon as released, being back in the temple by daybreak, in time for the morning sacrifice at sunrise. There they stood, and bore witness for Christ, moved by the consciousness that they ought to obey God rather than men.

There is a call to heroism in our day. In this message and the example of the apostles we hear it: "Stand!" "Stand!"

I. "STAND" IN THE PLACE OF DANGER.

The apostles had been arrested in Solomon's porch,

The exclamation of their enemies was: "Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple." They were back again in the same place. No wonder the daring of men who would go straight back to the place of their apprehension compelled astonishment. But ready for such heroic conduct should be every Christian. On the mission fields, in many lines of effort to save men, there is danger—sometimes to life, but more often to our peace and tranquility; yet we should stand. Like the pilot of the burning ship guiding her to the beach; like the engineer who instead of jumping stuck to his engine and forced it safely thro an obstruction; so should we heroically stand in the place of danger when called to it by the voice of duty.

II. "STAND" IN THE PLACE OF OBEDIENCE.

1. The obedience of these men of God was *literal.* The angel said, "Go, stand," and they were found "standing." He said, "Speak to the people," and they were found "teaching the people."

2. Their obedience was very *prompt.* The command was, "Speak in the temple." "And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning." No delay.

3. Their obedience was *continuous.* This we learn from the 42nd verse of this chapter: "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

A man asking for work was bidden to take a rope and pail, draw water from a well and pour it into a sieve. The work seemed highest folly. But he continued hour after hour the long day thro. As even-

ing approached, he found the well nearly dry; then he happened to notice a bright, sparkling light at the bottom. It proved to be a ring set with a brilliant gem which had been dropped into the well. He had not understood before; but having been instant and faithful in obedience he now saw the reason for the work he had been given to do. God will choose those to be co-workers with Him who will do just what they are told, literally, promptly, continuously.

III. "STAND" IN THE PLACE OF OPPORTUNITY.

The place where God bids us to go is the place of opportunity. The apostles found people in the temple. There they had hearers. To these hearers they carried a message, bore a testimony. Another chance to preach to the people and another chance to reach the ears of the council was their reward. In the place of opportuity let us not fear or fail to stand.

IV. "STAND" IN THE PLACE OF PRIVILEGE.

The place of danger and of obedience and of opportunity was the place of privilege. It gave them the privilege of serving God and of bringing about results in His Kingdom. Duty ever enlarges into privilege. The duty of sowing the seed of the Gospel widens out into the privilege of harvesting souls. The duty of standing obediently, becomes the privilege of harvesting souls. The duty of standing obediently, becomes the privilege of conscious communion with God. The duty of doing hard things or dangerous things for Christ's sake brings the privilege of by-and-by hearing his, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Let us live lives that are heroic in faithfulness. Let us "stand" for God. Let us do it wherever the place he puts us to-day.

Blest to Bless.

"I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing." (*R. V.*) Gen. 12: 2.

When God blesses us with gifts of any kind, he wants us to be a blessing to others. Nothing he gives us is for ourselves alone; we receive that we may give again.

I. Notice, first, the fact that THIS IS GOD'S PLAN FOR CARRYING ON HIS WORK. So far as we can see it is God's plan to convert the world thro man's effort for men. Christ said, "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you." There was once a man who came to Christ being possessed of an unclean spirit. Christ cast out the evil spirit and restored him to his right mind. Then, in his gratitude, the man prayed that he might go with Christ. The wish seemed natural and right, but, "No," Christ said, "I have blessed thee, now be thou a blessing—go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for thee." Two of John's disciples were pointed to Christ. They asked him, "Master, where dwellest thou?" And he said, "Come and see." They spent the day with him. But the blessing they got had all the force of a command to them. It was as if Christ had said, "Now, John, I have blest thee, be thou a blessing. Go find your brother and bring him to me." Or, turning to Andrew, "Andrew, you have been with me to-day; now that I have blest thee, be thou a blessing to thy brother Simon."

Whatever the gift God has bestowed upon you, he wants you to use it to bless others.

1. Maybe he has given you *youth, vigor and strength.* He says, "I will bless thee with these; now be thou a blessing to others thro these gifts."

2. Maybe God has blessed you with *loving, winning ways,*—with beauty of person and form and feature. He says to you, "Be thou a blessing, and use these gifts to win others to Christ." You can teach in theSunday-school, you can work in the church; by your very winsomeness you can bless others.

3. Maybe God has blessed you with the *possession of influence* and the respect of your neighbors. These are gifts you may employ to bless the world.

4. God may have *blessed you as parents.* You have the love of your family as a rich gift; now be thou a blessing by using a parent's influence to lead your household to Christ.

5. God may have *blessed you in business and entrusted* you with means. Be thou a blessing in helping the poor, and in supporting and spreading the gospel.

6. It may be the *gift of music or song you possess.* Then be you a singing pilgrim, hymning the gospel into the hearts of men. "Tho they may forget the singer, they will not forget the song."

Not one of us but has some talent, some opportunity, some way in which we have been blessed that we may use, in turn, in blessing others. It is our duty to do so. It is in this way God's work is to be done in the world.

II. Not only is this God's plan, but, secondly, ALL OUR SUCCESS DEPENDS UPON OUR FOLLOWING IT.

There is a dangerous tendency in these days toward individual shifting of personal duty upon the shoulders

of committees, and corporations, and associations. We form associations. We pass resolutions. We appoint commitees. We circulate petitions. Let us remember that none of these things can take the place of personal, individual effort. Your individual duty cannot be done thro any committee or association. There is a tendency to rely upon great movements in the Church,—upon the use of methods and machinery. The Church can not by any method lay hold of some huge drag-net and draw in at a single haul a multitude of fishes. Christian work must be largely individual work, upon individual hearts. Dr. Cuyler recently said: "A great many crude things have been said about the machinery of revivals; but there is one sort of machinery as old as the apostles and which never wears out; it is the simple method of personal effort prompted by love." All Christian work succeeds largely in proportion as individual Christians become possessed with the sense of their personal duty. "I will bless thee, and be thou a blessing." Great things would come about if in all our churches we could get the membership conscious of their personal opportunities and responsibilities. Mr. Spurgeon says that when Moses went to tell the king of Egypt that he would call up the plague of frogs upon the land, he can imagine the king answering: "Your God is the God of frogs, is he? Well, I am not afraid of frogs, so bring them on." "But," says Moses, "there are a great many of them, O King." And the king found that out. So we may be very weak individually, but in each church there are a great many of us, and we may accomplish a great deal of work if we will.

God's plan is this: "I will bless thee; be thou a bless-

ing." All our success depends upon our following that plan. But let us not forget, also, that our highest blessedness will come in this same way. God says, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." "To him that hath, shall be given." Our highest joy comes in the very act of service.

Heaven in the Heart.

"The Kingdom of God is within you."—Luke 17:21.

A kingdom is the dominion of a sovereign ruler. Nature is a kingdom, for a supreme Being is immanent in the universe and rules it with sovereign sway. But above the kingdom of nature there is another kingdom because above the physical process there is the life of the spirit. Both kingdoms are but parts of one great empire, and both are equally under the control of the one great Ruler.

The ancient Israelites believed God to be a sovereign; that he would one day set up a perfect government upon earth; that it would be administered thro a coming Messiah descending from the royal house of David, and that He would reign with invincible power and in great magnificence. It was the coming of the kingdom of God they so devoutly longed for and hopefully expected; while their minds were filled with glorious visions of courtly splendor, in which the gorgeous palace, the stately throne and the jewelled crown were conspicuous objects. It was an earth-born dream of an imaginative people, destined to certain disappointment. When at last the promised King came, it was in the

garb of a Galilean peasant whose royalty was of the spirit, and whose only coronation was thro the derision of His foes. "And when it was demanded by the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said: The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; (is not an outward, showy thing to be gazed upon) neither shall they say Lo, here! or Lo, there! (pointing out its external magnificence) for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.

From the many thoughts this verse suggests, let us select two: First, the fact of God's inner dominion; secondly, the happiness of those who submit themselves to his rule.

1. *God's Inner Dominion.*

What Christ spoke of here was of a kingdom that is established in the spirit of man. The kingdom of heaven was at hand two thousand years ago; and it has been coming, coming, coming, for centuries, into the hearts of men. God is not a being who dwells in some remote region of space. He is not some foreign potentate, to whose court, by and by, we must answer. He is near us; He is with us; He is in us. "The Kingdom of God is within you." It is a kingdom of the mind, the will, the feeling, the conduct. It is a kingdom of new convictions, producing new conversions and outward reforms; a kingdom of new life, kindling new ideas and forming fresh habits; a kingdom of love, revealing the Fatherhood of God and inspiring filial regard in man. It is not said that "the kingdom of God is not with observation," but "the kingdom of God *cometh* not with observation." The effects are seen, but the entrance of God into a human

heart to take up his reign there is not a thing to be seen with the human eyes.

2. *Consider the happiness of the subjects under God's spiritual dominion.*

Dreams of happiness we all indulge. We each have a sort of paradise of the mind, a vision of some happy attainable condition in which we shall be free from worry and want, vexation and strife. But too many of us seek this happiness outside of ourselves—in riches, in learning, in adventure, in excitement, in fame, in novelty, in friendships, flying to the very ends of the earth in search of it, when lo, it was to be found all the time at home. "The kingdom of God is within you," and the happiness men desire can only be found under that kingdom. Happiness is not something that can be manufactured and then pressed upon one as a bargain. It is not obtainable from the outside; it is from within, and in this fact lies the great desirability of being a Christian, and the highest type of a Christian, coming entirely under the dominion of the spiritual. All the way to heaven we may taste the joys of heaven.

It is said of an old Puritan that "Heaven was in him before he was in heaven." A Scotchman being asked if he ever expected to go to heaven, gave the quaint reply: "Why, mon, I live there."

It is the same heaven in both worlds. The only difference is one of degree. "Lay hold on eternal life." It is something for us to get hold of now. It is a thing of the future, but it is a thing of the present too; and even the part of it which is future can be so realized and grasped by faith as to be actually enjoyed while

we are here. Pardon, peace, rest of soul, assurance of hope, abounding joy and grace beyond measure, these and such as these are the blessings that come to the man who has this inner heaven in his heart. "The kingdom of God is within you." All the way to heaven is heaven.

Out of Egypt, and Into Canaan.

"And He brought us out from thence," etc. Deut. 6: 23.

This verse refers to that wonderful exodus from Egypt when God brought out his people—out of the land of bondage, and into their Canaan home. It was a great salvation, a signal deliverance which parents and children alike were to keep in mind. The verse beautifully illustrates, we think, the outbringing from sin and the inbringing into Christ of every Christian soul, which it is just as important, whether we be young or old, that we keep ever in loving remembrance.

1. Notice, in the first place, that *to every Christian soul there is a bringing out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* "He brought us out from thence that He might bring us in,"—out of the bondage of sin into the liberty of the children of God.

Every sinner is a slave. Conversion is emancipation. Christ is a liberator. The Bible constantly speaks of our condition in sin as bondage. The hardest bondage in this world is the bondage of sin. Like with Israel in Egypt, sin "makes our lives bitter, with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of

service." As truly as with the bondmen in Egypt is every unconverted soul forced to "make bricks without straw.'

But just here comes in the meaning of the mission of Christ. He is the soul's Emancipator, giving deliverance to every captive the moment He trusts him. On the instant of faith the fetters are stricken off, and we step forth upon God's broad earth, free men,—out of bondage and into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

He brought us out from thence that He might bring us in—

"Out of the distance and darkness so deep,
Out of the settled and perilous sleep;
Out of the bondage and wearing of chains,
Out of companionship ever with stains,—
Into the light and the glory of God,
Into the holiest, made clean by his blood;
Into the quiet, the infinite calm,
Into the place of the song and the psalm,—
Wonderful love, that has wrought all for me!
Wonderful work that has thus set me free!
Wonderful ground upon which I have come!
Wonderful tenderness, welcoming home!"

2. A second practical thought is this, that having sincerely accepted the deliverance of Christ, *God by His grace brings us out of the old practices and into the new.*

Conversion, if genuine, makes a radical change of conduct. Profane lips stop swearing, and tippling lips cease drinking, Sabbath-breakers seek the house of God and pleasure-seekers find higher pleasure in trying to please their Master.

A young girl recently seeking union with the Church was asked if she could think of any way in which be-

ing a Christian ought to make a change in her life. She replied, "I should think it ought to make a change in every way." Who will deny that she had the right conception of Christian living? She had firmly fixed in her mind and heart the principle that religion has much to do not only with the inward motive, but with the outward life.

Change of character and conduct is the test. "By their fruits ye shall know them." "He brought us out from thence that He might bring us in,"—out of old practices and into the new. See this illustrated in the change in Paul from a persecutor to the most devoted apostle. See it manifested in John Bunyan, born of a low Gypsy woman, wicked, vulgar, blasphemous beyond expression, yet yonder is John Bunyan again, behind the bars of Bedford prison, with God's Word in one hand, and with the other pointing the whole world into the way that leads from destruction up to the gates of the Celestial City! What a difference in the same man! God does by His grace bring us into the right and beautiful conduct of the new.

3. There is yet another "coming out," which is essential to all healthy and happy piety,—coming *out from the world and into Christ's fold.* Out of Egypt ought to mean into Canaan. We can not belong in the Church and in the world both. No man can divide his allegience. The Bible draws sharp lines. On one side walks Christ; on the other side goes the world. No man can bestride the line and walk with both. It is said that the first king of the Saxons who was baptised had in the same church one altar to the Christian religion and another for sacrificing to demons. It will never

do! Full well do we know that no such service is acceptable to God. Half heartedness is sin. Indecision is sin. Delay is sin. When God gives us His grace, He asks in return a heart-loyalty that will carry us clear over from the world's side to Christ's side. "He brings us out from thence that He may bring us in."

"Out of the false and into the true,
Out of the old man into the new,
Out of what measures the full depth of 'lost',
Out of it all at an infinite cost;
Into the union which noth ng can part,
Into what satisfies His and my heart;
Into the deepest of joys ever had—
Into the gladness of making God glad!
Wonderful Person whom I shall behold!
Wonderful story then all to be told!
Wonderful all the dread way he trod!
Wonderful *end*, he has *brought me o God!*"

A Closed Door and a Waiting Savior.

"*Behold I stand at the door and knock,*" *etc.* Rev. 3:20.

There is a wonderful picture by Holman Hunt, called "The Light of the World." It reperesents the Savior knocking at the door of the heart, in illustration of these words: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," etc. He stands with bowed head, listening. Across the door vines have grown; it has been long since it was unclosed. He holds in His hand a lantern, from which the rays fall on some fruit which has dropped ungathered. His back is toward the light of the rising moon. The attitude is that of earnest, importunate waiting.

There is another picture, by the artist Bida, which might well be made a companion piece of Hunt's. It illustrates the passage in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew regarding the five foolish virgins. They, too, are in waiting, having cast themselves down in despair on the steps of a palace. One picture reperesents Jesus standing at the door of men's hearts knocking for admission there; the other shows us those who have refused to hear His voice pleading for admission into His heavenly kingdom. One refers to time, the other to the morning of eternity. One shows how easy it is to be saved now; the other shows how hopeless we will have made our condition if we harden our hearts, neglect our opportunities, continue to exclude Christ, and let our characters become fixed in the mould of evil.

I. A CLOSED DOOR AND A WAITING SAVIOR.

1. Infinite love is certainly manifested in the fact that Christ, the King of earth and heaven, *comes* to *us,* not waiting for us to go to Him.

2. More than this, He *stands,* in the position of a suppliant. How strange that any one should hesitate to hasten out and entreat Him to come in as rightful Lord and most welcome guest!

3. But His affectionate desire towards us is not satisfied without further demonstrations. "Behold," saith He, "I stand at the door and *knock.*" He will not force the door; but He is there, standing, knocking! He is not merely willing to save you, but has an earnest, importunate desire to save you. It is not the prodigal seeking the father, but, greater love than that, the Father seeks the prodigal. Instead of your seeking

Him, He has found you. The question is not, will the Savior accept you? but, will you reject the Savior?

4. But knocking does not exhaust His efforts, for He *calls*. "If any man hear my voice." He has a voice, a kind and pleading voice. He has not spoken a single harsh word to you as He has stood at the door of your heart. "O, Voice of Love, how kind Thou art!"

5. Bear in mind that Christ will never force the door of your heart. It was once exclaimed by one of our most eloquent senators that an Englishman's cottage is his castle. It is true. The winds may whistle thro every crevice, and the rains penetrate thro every cranny, but into the cottage the monarch of England dare not enter against the cotter's will. This is just the state of the case between Christ and the human soul. He has such a respect for the will of that immortal tenant that He has placed within us that He will never force an entrance. He will do everything else; He will come, and stand, and knock, and call, but He will never force an entrance. "If any man hear my voice and *open the door* I will come in," etc.

II. THE OPEN DOOR AND CHRIST WITHIN. "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

1. Here is, first, the promise of His divine *incoming*. He makes the unqualified assurance that if we open the door, He will come in. There is no perhaps or peradventure about it. If we want to be saved He will save us. If we open our hearts He will enter.

2. Here is also promise of His divine *indwelling*. After He has entered, if we cherish His loving presence, He will stay—dwelling with us, giving us an

earnest of the joys of life eternal.

This is all the more plainly seen by His promise of fellowship. "I will sup with him, and he with me." He sits down with us as friend with friend, as brother with brother at a familiar table. He talks with us, and invites us to talk with Him. He opens the way for us to tell Him of our sorrows and our joys, our perplexities and our hopes, our difficulties and our desires; and then He takes of the things of the Father and shows them unto us until the chamber of communion glows within us, and we are filled with light and peace and strength and holy joy.

3. But you may ask, What kind of a feast can I give for such a guest. Fear not to invite Him in, for, strange to say, the Master brings His own provision. He spreads the table of divine satisfaction and offers to you—His fortunate and grateful host. "Eat, O friend," He exclaims, "drink; yea, drink abundantly."

4. May be you wonder how you will ever be able to serve Him as you ought, if you do admit Him as your Lord. Can you hold out? Yes, and just because the meat He gives you increases strength, your fellowship with Him drives out evil, and He makes His grace sufficient for you.

Oh, unsatisfied one, this is the kind of Savior who is standing just outside the fast-barred door of your heart. Open the door and let Him in. Swing it wide open and invite Him in. Receive Him, welcome Him with humble gratitude. If you do, that seeking One will prove both your Redeemer and Friend, and for time and for eternity.

The Secret of a Strong Heart.

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."—Ps. 27:14.

This psalm is a song of cheerful hope. This hopeful attitude was maintained by the Psalmist in the face of the fact that he was in most distressing circumstances. From the psalm itself we gather the inferences that he was pursued by enemies (vs. 2), shut away from God's house (vs.4), parted from father and mother (vs. 10), and subject to the opposition of slander (vs. 12). The circumstances seem to point to the time when Doeg, the Edomite, spake against him to Saul.

It is also a psalm of personal experience. It bears testimony to personal blessings received, and of assurances growing out of them. It is as tho he had said: "I have found the Lord my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? He has proven to be the strength of my life; and of whom then shall I be afraid? When enemies, wicked, many, full of cruel hate, made onslaught to destroy me, they stumbled and fell. I have decided that tho a host should encamp against me, I will not allow my heart to fail me or become fluttered by fear; yes, even tho it may come to actual war that He will defend me. He will hide me in his pavilion. He will give me the best shelter in the worst danger. A royal pavilion is erected in the centre of the army, and around it all the mighty men keep guard at all hours, so will He hide me in this very safest place, beside my King. Or my

safety will be as one in the secret of His tabernacle; not at the horns of the altar or even in the holy place so sacred, but as it were in the very holy of holies,—the inner chamber of Divine presence and protection. If not thus hidden, then He will set me upon a rock, in some strong tower of impregnable situation and defence. I had fainted had I not had his faith and felt assured thus of the goodness and love of God. But I have tested His grace and His help; my faith has grown out of experience, and now I want to commend to others the God who has been so good to me, and my call is to all, Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

The centre of that promise is in the assurance of having the heart strengthened. This is what we all so much need and so much desire—strength of heart.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTH OF HEART.

1. It is the secret of *confidence.* We will make no effort in a direction in which we have no confidence or expectation of attainment.

2. It is the secret of *courage.* We can scarcely "be of good courage" without possessing first some measure of confidence of success.

3. It is the secret of *action.* A strong heart makes a strong arm.

4. It is the secret of *victory.* Confidence, courage and action bring victory. So all success depends upon possessing a strong heart.

II. THE SECRET OF A STRONG HEART.

A strong heart is usually found thro some of the various ways of "waiting on the Lord."

1. In spiritual *meditation.* While we muse the fire burns. Many Christians are weak of heart and purpose in these days because they live in such a hurry and do not take time to "wait on the Lord" in the way of spiritual thoughtfulness and meditation. We need more "quiet hours," when we may receive grace and strength from God. Many of the mighty men of faith and Christian usefulness of the past—men like Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, etc.—were men of much spiritual meditation.

2. *In prayer.* It is in the act of prayer we grow strong of heart and fitted for success in God's cause. It was as he wrestled with God that Jacob, the supplanter, was changed to Israel, the prince of God; with princely power with God and men.

3. *In Bible study.* The heart grows strong as we read and meditate upon God's precious promises; note His assurances of help, study His character and take into your souls His truth.

4. In the use of the *other means of grace*—attendance at the house of prayer, union with fellow believers in the privileges of the sanctuary, and actual enlistment in Christian service. These are all ways of "waiting on the Lord" in the steps of obedience; and are thus all ways in which the heart grows strong.

Are you lacking in the spirit of good cheer and hopefulness? Get closer to God and your heart will grow strong. Do you find yourself lacking in Christian courage? Get near enough to grasp His all-conquering hand and you will be able to "do exploits" in His name? Are you conscious of a sad lack of power as a worker? As the trolley pole is held up close against

the wire and power comes down to move the car, so hold yourself in intimate contact with God; wait upon Him, wait upon Him, keep near enough to Him for His grace to flow into your soul, and you will be strong for His service and have power to perform wonders. A strong heart is necessary to success, and the secret of getting that strong heart is contact with God.

Practicing the Presence of God.

"Thou are near, O Lord."—Ps. 119:151.

This phrase, "Practicing the presence of God," is an ancient one, found in the works of Jeremy Taylor, Brother Lawrence, and others, and is used in many excellent devotional books. It is suggestive of souls who in past days, and happily in present days too, have entered into a most blessed experience of the spiritual life.

The living a life hid with Christ in God, a life under the abiding sense of God's presence, is something we should all strive more fully to attain.

It may prove helpful in this direction if we will consider just what is involved in the practice of the presence of God.

I. As a first step it involves the yielding of ourselves cordially and fully to God.

1. This yielding should be a *definite response to recognized duty.* We belong to God; we are his by creation; we are his by redemption. It is therefore our duty to honor God's right in us and yield ourselves heartily and fullty to his control.

2. This yielding must be a *decisive act of the will.* The reason so many fail in attaining the Spirit-filled life is that there are points at which they hold back from God, preferring to have their own way and will rather than his.

3. Again, the yielding should be an *irrevocable act of faith.* It should be a deliberate, once-for-all going over to God, believing in his acceptance and going forward under the assurance of it.

II. IT INVOLVES, FURTHERMORE, THE PUTTING AWAY OF EVERY KNOWN SIN AND A DETERMINATE DECISION TO RESIST EVERY ASSAULT OF EVIL.

Does God discover to you some evil practice or habit you have been indulging? Is there some secret sin that has been gnawing at the vitals of your religion? Have you been permitting your affections to roam unrestricted after forbidden objects? Do you cherish resentment or hate toward some one and refuse to be reconciled? Alas, in the case of the most of us it needs but little searching; for we know the besetting sin, the favorite idol, which keeps God out. We cannot practice the presence of God while cherished sin is in our hearts.

III. IT INVOLVES, TOO, THE CAREFUL CULTIVATION OF EVERY SPIRITUAL GRACE.

1. *Think of God.* That is to say, be always realizing his presence, in work, in prayer, in recreation, in repose. Try to arrive at the habitual sense of his nearness. Say to yourself over and over again every day, and many times in the day: "Thou are near, O Lord!" "God is here." "God is with me." "God is in me." "I am his." "He is mine." By cultivating such a habit of mind we can arrive at a happy and abiding sense of his

presence. There is one thing which is most essential, namely, the being frequently alone with God. We can have him with us best only when we daily give ourselves a pause in which to think of God, commune with him and let him come in and fill our souls.

2. *Listen to God.* He is not a silent God. He speaks to us, thro his providences, thro his word, thro his spirit. If we would practice the presence of God we must be attentive to his counsels, heed his commands, answer his invitations and enter into personal communion with him. Let your attitude be, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." God has much to say to those who will attentively listen to his voice.

3. *Speak to God.* Express your love; bring your desires; tell your gratitude for his gifts. Hold converse with him in the hour of morning meditation, in the set times for prayer and the study of his word, in the quick ejaculatory petitions of the busiest moments of the day. Try to get into an habitual state of familiar converse and communion with God.

4. *Love God.* Be devoted to him, and to him supremely. Have no affection apart from him. All lawful loves—of friends, wife, children, kindred—love them *in* God; do not love them *and* God. Serve him; but do it out of love. Delight to do his will. In all ways strive to grow into closest intimacy with God and into accord with his mind and Spirit.

There are blessed results flowing from a life thus spent in the practice of the presence of God. Such practice is the secret of peace. It is the secret of life of hapipness and joy. It is the secret of living a life of love and highest usefulness in the world. Guidance

mid life's perplexities, wisdom for life's decisions, cheer for life's sorrows, and help over life's hard places come with it. Knowledge of God and resultant transformation into his likeness comes with it. It is worth our while, both in view of the present and the future blessedness to "practice the presence of God."

The Heavenly Home Gathering.

"And they shall come from the east, and the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."—Luke 13:29.

In the phrase "kingdom of God" the New Testament usually denotes either the spiritual reign of Christ over the hearts of individuals or over his church collectively; but it also sometimes, as here, denotes the state of glory beyond the grave.

A number of inferences, very precious to the heart of the believer, may be drawn from this Scripture.

I. ONE IS THAT THIS KINGDOM OF HEAVEN SHALL BE VASTLY POPULATED. "They shall come from the east," etc. The four quarters of the globe shall contribute to swell the population of heaven.

In Matthew (8:11) this thought is more fully brought out, when it is said, "Many shall come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Some men of very contracted views and a few intense sectarians sometimes speak and act as if they think the population of heaven will be limited to a few; but the Bible plainly teaches that Christ shall "bring many sons into

glory." (Heb. 2: 10) "a great multitude, such as no man can number." (Rev. 7: 9). Satan's kingdom shall not contain more inhabitants than Christ's. Neither is heaven for the Jews alone, or the Gentiles alone, nor for any one sect, but it is the heaven of all believers; and these shal come from all nations." From "the east and the west, from the north and from the south." From Ethiopa and China, from Asia and Australia, from America and Russia, from Siberia and the Polar seas, from the islands of the ocean and every country under the sun they shall "come" and "sit down in the kingdom of God.'

II. A SECOND SUGGESTION IS THAT OF THE AGREEABLE ASSOCIATION THE INHABITANTS SHALL FIND IN THAT KINGDOM.

With heavenly familiarity and harmony, because redeemed by the same precious blood, people without distinction of nation or clime or earthly circumstances will "sit down" together in sweet communion there. Monarchs and peasants, princes and beggars, masters and servants, the learned and the ignorant, all will meet in happy association, made one in a common enjoyment of glory.

Let us not fail to notice too, that this association shall be in the blessedness of mutual recognition. "They shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," etc. These patriarchs will be known; the prophets will be known; the apostles and martyrs will be known. We shall know each other there. Would it not be a strange thing, indeed, were God to invite to sit at his banqueting table for the purpose of enjoyment a company all strangers, not knowing one another and incapable of

becoming acquainted? No, the picture God gives us of heaven is one of most blessed and intimate associations between himself and his redeemed, and mutually between all who enter that happy home. All will know one another; sweet assurance to all who have been bereaved!

III. A THIRD SUGGESTION IS IN REGARD TO THE RESPONSE AND HIGH ENJOYMENT ALL WHO ENTER THAT KINGDOM SHALL FIND.

"They shall sit down." This is a peculiar phrase as applied to beatific bliss. It refers to a feast, especially to an Eastern feast, where the guests sat, or rather reclined. The position was always recumbent, one of great restfulness and ease. The word used in its reference to heaven is far more meaningful than our common expression to sit.

1. They shall "sit down" *to rest.* They shall recline on the pillow of heavenly peace. No more contest with sin; no pain; no sorrow; forever free from trouble, "Calm on the bosom of their God."

2. They shall "sit down" *to converse.* It is not alone rest, but rest in the midst of the most happy associations. This heavenly feast implies the sweetest communion with our heavenly Father, with Christ, our Savior, with the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide, with the saints and angels, and with our loved ones in glory. Our tongues shall abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness; and with the utmost familiarity, to our great mutual benefit, and to our highest enjoyment we will engage in heavenly converse.

3. They shall "sit down" *to listen.* How certainly

God will reveal himself, the mystery of his providential dealings with us, his plans, his wisdom, his great love, speaking to all at its great banqueting table in parental affection and familiarity. There will be the rapturous strains of heaven's music to hear, the harpers and the songs of the redeemed; as also God's ever-occuring plans of new creations, new operations, and new sources of pleasure, to be developed in his boundless universe.

Let us live here below that we may have right, by and by, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the redeemed, at the final home gathering in the kingdom of God.

Being God's and Serving God.

"Whose am I and whom I serve." Acts 27: 23.

This sentence from the lips of Paul is worthy of being used as a motto by every Christian. First, "Whose I am,"—to *be* God's. Then "Whom I serve,"—to *serve* God. First, belonging to God, dedicated to His name, given over to His ownership. Then "Whom I serve," consecrated to His cause, kept for His use, made over heart and hand to His service. To be God's and to serve God—who could imagine a higher ideal? Such an aim steadily adhered to would make any life noble.

I. DEDICATION. Let us follow a little farther this thought of being God's. It implies the full dedication of ourselves to Him, a solemn setting ourselves apart to Him from a sense of duty. The word dedicate is from

de and *dico,* and signifies to set apart by a promise.

1. It implies, first, *the abstracting ourselves from all other claims of ownership.* The person who truly dedicates himself to God cannot go on serving the world, the flesh and Satan. He cannot reserve part of himself, or of his time or talents, to himself or to others. He is God's and God's alone. His whole life must be controlled to the end of glorifying God.

2. It implies not alone this abstracting of ourselves from other claims or ownership, but a *solemn act of giving ourselves to God.* It must partake of the nature of such a service as when a church is dedicated. It is an act of setting apart, a consecration, a transfer to God's ownership and uses. It would be better for us, as Christians, if we made more than we do of solemn and definite acts in the way of dedication to God.

Several years since some forty thousand people stood on the shore and watched the launching of the St. Louis in the Cramps' shipyard. Most of the stays that had held the great liner on the incline, on which she had been built, were removed, and yet she stood there motionless. Then, amid an almost audible hush, the order was given in answer to which great mauls, wielded by mighty arms, broke away the few remaining braces and, fully released, she glided out into the waters of the Delaware, *freed for service.*

Too many of us are "partly separated" from the world and "partly consecrated" to Christ. It is the few remaining stays, release from which we are reluctant to seek, which do so much to mar the efficiency of our service for God. It is supremely important that

we withdraw ourselves from all other claims of ownership and turn ourselves over fully to the ownership of God.

II. CONSECRATION. We use this word in the active sense of devotement to service. There is a distinct difference between the idea of dedication and devotement. We dedicate a house to God. We devote our time to His service. Consecration in this sense, follows dedication. It means the application of ourselves to the object of our dedication with zeal and affection. First we give ourselves to God; then we devote ourselves to His cause. First we be God's and then we serve God.

1. This implies that we *identify ourselves with God's cause.* His cause becomes our cause, His kingdom our kingdom, His glory our glory.

2. This will *lead us to serve His Church.* The Church is His ministering body in the world. We will identify ourselves with it, put on the uniform of His army, march with it to battle and do all in our power to win for God the victory over all the opposing hosts of evil.

3. This devotement will also lead us to *serve individual souls.* We will try to win others to Him, one by one , using the power of personal influence and persuasion.

God will use us if we thus devote ourselves to His service. When Saladin looked at the sword of Richard Coeur de Lion he wondered that a blade so ordinary should have wrought such mighty deeds. The English King bared his arm and said: "It was not the sword that did those things; it was the arm of Richard." We should be instruments that God can use. He uses hu-

man instruments. He does not send angels to make known His gospel. If we are kept for the Master's use, given outright to Him, set apart for His service, He will make us the instruments of mighty results in His kingdom.

III. COMMUNION. One thing more is implied in our being dedicated to God and given over to His service—communion, or association with God. Both the giving of ourselves and of our service is love prompted. We therefore need converse with the One we serve. We will be efficient in service just in proportion as we "practice the presence of God." We need to live under the consciousness that He is near, that He sees us, is with us, is in us. This is what will make us strong and hopeful and cheerful and courageous and successful. Give yourself to God. Then set out in the way of His service. And while thus engaged practice the sense of His presence. Say to yourself over and over again every day: "God is here." "God is with me." "God is in me." "I am His." "He is mine." "God is love." "God loves me." Try to arrive at an habitual sense of His presence. These three steps, dedication, consecration and communion would give us all useful, happy and victorious lives.

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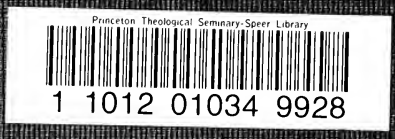
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